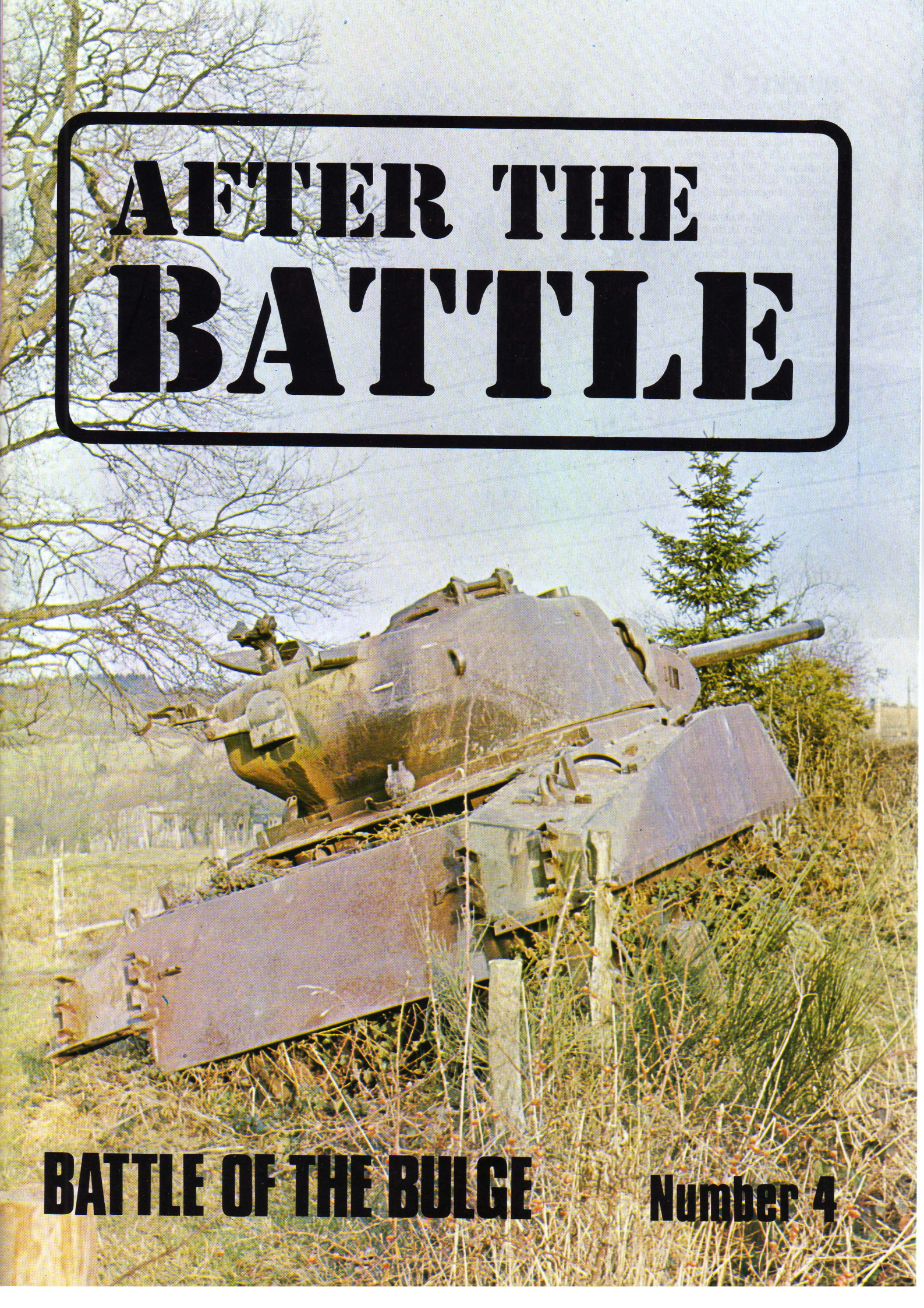

AFTER THE BATTLE

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Number 4

NUMBER 4

Editor: Winston G. Ramsey
Published by
Battle of Britain International Ltd.,
Church House, Church Street,
London E15 3JA, England
Telephone: (020) 8534 8833
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E-mail: afterthebattle@mcmail.com
Web site:
http://www.afterthebattle.mcmail.com
Printed in Great Britain by
Trafford Print Colour Ltd.,
Shaw Wood Way, Doncaster DN2 5TB.

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After the Battle is published quarterly on the 15th of February, May, August and November.

United Kingdom Newsagent Distribution:
Lakeside Publishing Services Ltd, Unit 1D, Tideway Industrial Estate, Kirtling Street, London SW8 5BP
United States Distribution and Subscriptions:
RZM Imports, PO Box 995, Southbury, CT, 06488
Telephone: 1-203-264-0774
Canadian Distribution and Subscriptions:
Vanwell Publishing Ltd., 1 Northrup Crescent, St. Catharines, Ontario L2M 6P5.
Telephone: (905) 937 3100 Fax: (905) 937 1760
Australian Subscriptions and Back Issues:
Technical Book and Magazine Company, Pty, Ltd., 289-299 Swanston Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000.
Telephone: 663 3951
New Zealand Distribution:
Dal McGuirk's "MILITARY ARCHIVE", P.O. Box 24486, Royal Oak, Auckland 1030 New Zealand.
Telephone: 021 627 870 Fax: 9-6252817
Italian Distribution:
Tuttostoria, Casella Postale 395, 1-43100 Parma.
Telephone: 0521 292 733, Telex 532274 EDIALB I
Dutch Language Edition:
Quo Vadis, Postbus 3121, 3760 DC Soest.
Telephone: 035 6018641

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Front Cover: Relics from the Battle of the Bulge. M4 Sherman tank photographed beside the road between Magoster and Beffe, Belgium, January 1974.

Centre Pages: A submarine returns from patrol. Dunoon, Scotland (IWM).

Back Cover: One of the Pzkpfw 6 Tiger IIs (King Tiger) from Kampfgruppe Peiper preserved at La Gleize, Belgium. Henschel Turret and KwK L/71 88-mm gun.

Acknowledgements:
The editor is indebted to the authors and publishers of the following books to quote extracts:
'Nuts' from *Rendezvous with Destiny* by Rapport and Northwood, 101st Airborne Division Association.
Advance of Kampfgruppe Peiper based on the account by Janice Holt Giles in *The Damned Engineers,* Houghton Mifflin.
Britain's offshore forts prepared with thanks to the East Anglian Times, Soldier Magazine and Derek Booth.
The Longest Day, photographs by courtesy of 20th Century Fox, California.

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ISSN: 0306-154X

Above: **Staged for the benefit of the camera, German troops (one armed with an American M1 Carbine) 'advance' on Poteau at the beginning of the attack. (IWM)** *Below:* **Fred Ramage took this picture of the US 2nd Armoured Division armour entering Dochamps as the Americans begin to advance. (IWM)** *Opposite:* **An abandoned US half-track spells a triumphant victory for Kampfgruppe Peiper as grenadiers enter Honsfeld.**

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

The scene is set

Hitler's plan for a German offensive began to take shape as early as July 31, 1944, when the Allied armies broke out of Normandy and began their advance across France.

Hitler held a staff conference that day and said over and over again that the final decision must come in the West, even if other fronts must suffer as a consequence.

During the next two weeks Hitler began to clarify his plans and he announced on August 19 that the offensive would begin in November when Allied air forces would be hampered by bad weather. He ordered large quantities of war material to be prepared for the Western front.

On September 2, Hitler stated his demands to Goebbels—twenty-five new divisions to be established as the Sixth Panzer Army. Goebbels scraped the barrel in industry, the under-age and over-age, the Navy and Luftwaffe. Some troops were withdrawn from the Balkans and Finland. Field-Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt was recalled from retirement to take over as Commander-in-Chief West—giving the following offensive the name by which it is known on the Continent—the von Rundstedt offensive. Field-Marshal Walther Model was given command of Army Group B, which would make the actual assault.

The backbone of the troops, however, would be primarily those units already on the Western front, especially the SS Panzer divisions, who were to be refitted and reformed.

On September 16, Hitler stated the aims of the offensive—an attack through the Ardennes—the historic gateway used by German troops in 1870, 1914 and again in 1940, with the objective—Antwerp. He had been informed that this part of the Allied line, apart from being the junction between British and US troops, was thinly held, and was considered by the Americans (on whose troops the attack would fall) as a rest front.

Hitler's military commanders couldn't really understand why Antwerp, admittedly an important sea port, was to be the goal. Hitler, however, wanted another Dunkirk—to be able to roll up the British armies as in 1940 and get them out of the war.

On September 25, Jodl began the detailed planning as follows:

1. The attack should be launched sometime between November 20 and 30 when flying weather would be bad.
2. It should be made through the Ardennes in the Monschau-Echternach sector.
3. The initial objective would be the seizure of bridgeheads over the River Meuse between Liege and Namur.
4. Thereafter Antwerp would be the objective.
5. A battle to annihilate the British and Canadians would ultimately be fought north of the line Antwerp-Liege-Bastogne.
6. A minimum of thirty divisions would be available, ten of which would be armoured.
7. Support would be given by an unprecedented concentration of artillery and rocket projector units.
8. Operational control would be vested in four armies—two panzer armies in the centre and two infantry armies to cover the flanks.
9. The Luftwaffe would be prepared to support the operation.
10. All planning would aim at securing tactical surprise, and speed.
11. Secrecy would be maintained at all costs and only a very few individuals would be privy to the plan until the last moment.

In the event the attack was delayed until December 16.

Von Rundstedt first learnt of the plans on October 21. Hitler's code name for the offensive was 'Watch on the Rhine', a name that if it reached the Allies would hide its true purpose.

The Sixth Panzer Army, with all its Waffen SS armoured divisions, was given the most important role in the north facing the US 99th Infantry Division along its entire line from Monschau to the Losheim Gap—a long seven-mile wide valley north of the Schnee Eifel mountains—the traditional gateway used by three generations of attacking German troops. Command of the Sixth Panzer was given to an old Nazi friend of Hitler's, Sepp Dietrich.

South of the Sixth came the Fifth Panzer Army commanded by Baron Hasso von Manteuffel. He was to encircle the Schnee

Eifel, surrounding two regiments of the new US 106th Infantry Division and capture St. Vith, the most important road and rail centre in his sector. The rest of his army would race for the River Meuse across Luxembourg and protect the flank of the Sixth in the north.

Further south again came the Seventh Army commanded by General Erich Brandenberger. He was to protect the entire southern flank against Patton's 3rd US Army.

Hitler also planned a specific role for his Commando extraordinaire, Lieutenant-Colonel Otto Skorzeny, considered by the Allies to be Germany's most dangerous agent. Skorzeny was to raise the 150th Panzer Brigade but with one important difference, these German troops were to be dressed as Americans, be led by English-speaking officers, and equipped with American equipment. They were to mingle with the Americans who it was hoped would retreat when the offensive began, and, adding to the confusion, advance and hold the Meuse bridges for the following Panzers.

Skorzeny soon realised that to organise a full brigade of English speakers in the time available was impossible so he settled for an alternative, two tank battalions, a paratroop battalion and signalmen with the addition of two battalions of his own crack troops.

Obtaining American equipment was a headache. Skorzeny wanted twenty Sherman tanks and many jeeps—he got two tanks and thirty jeeps. He plated over Panther tanks to look like Shermans and augmented the latter with khaki-painted German Fords and Czech and French cars. He hoped to capture further vehicles on the way. Then, volunteers in a special Americanised Company, equipped with American jeeps, uniforms and weapons with at least one fluent English speaker to each team, were to lead the brigade infiltrating behind the US lines, to gather information, commit sabotage and create confusion.

In order that German troops would not fire on his brigade, Skorzeny took special precautions. All his tanks were to keep their guns at nine o'clock throughout the journey with no shooting at first. If they met German troops later, the soldiers were to take off their American helmets. All vehicles had yellow triangles in the rear.

His 3000 men were brought together for special training under rigid security and told nothing of the purpose of their mission. Inevitably rumours started. Because of Skorzeny's reputation for kidnap, the troops believed they were training to capture Eisenhower. Skorzeny allowed this rumour to grow—it was a good cover story.

One final unit was prepared for the attack, that of Baron Friedrich von der Heydte. He was ordered to take charge of a regiment of parachutists to drop behind enemy lines before the offensive started. He was only briefed on December 4, the equipment arrived at Dalhem, eight miles east of the border, on December 13 with final details being issued on December 14.

With such a rushed programme, training was inadequate, co-ordination bad, and many men had not jumped recently. This lack of training was to reap disaster when the time came. Von der Heydte himself had to jump with a broken arm.

The attack begins

At daybreak on Saturday December 16, 1944, German artillery, from Monschau in the north to Echternach on the Luxembourg border, along an 85-mile stretch of thinly held American line, opened fire beginning what was later to be known as 'the Battle of the Bulge'.

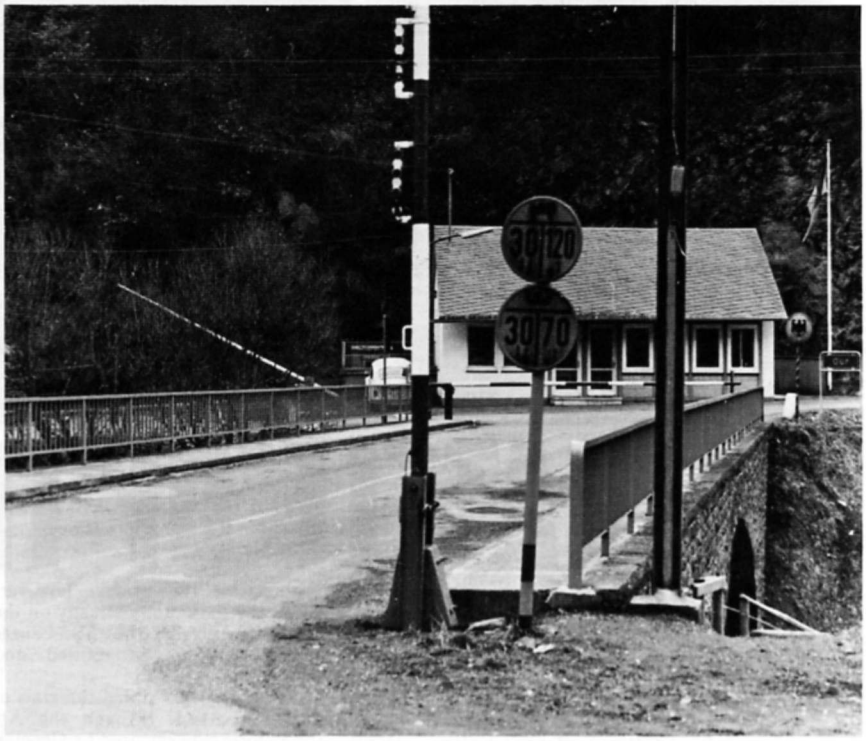
When the bombardment stopped, at different times in different places, German troops advancing through the fog attacked the US troops in complete surprise. An American journalist later wrote that, with the exception of Pearl Harbour, never had American troops been thrown into greater confusion by an attack as that mounted in December 1944. Caught off guard, lulled into a false sense of security by the preceding weeks of quietness on this 'rest' front, the Germans pushed the Americans back or rather the Americans retreated all along the front. This is not to say there was no resistance. Isolated groups of men, eventually driven back or surrounded, fought battles but the overall breakdown in communications contributed largely to the disorganisation and inability to mount an organised defence.

In the 'Schnee Eifel', the 106th Division was surrounded, losing two of its three battalions. Further south the 28th Division was crushed by five German divisions.

Because of the almost mountainous countryside in the eastern Ardennes, advance or retreat by a mechanised army is limited to using available roads and incredible traffic jams built up of Americans streaming westward and German tanks and vehicles attempting to start the attack.

In the north the 1st SS Panzer Division was delayed by a blown railway bridge. The advance of one combat group of this Division will be followed later.

In the centre at Dasburg, German engineers had failed to erect a sixty-ton bridge across the Our River, and advantage of the initial successful attacks by German infantry, whose intended role was to clear the way for the armour along the whole front, could have been lost. Manteuffel himself controlled the traffic over the bridge for a time when it was finally constructed. Six kilometres west lay Clervaux—the main obstacle to Manteuffel's Fifth Panzers in their drive to Bastogne and on to the River Meuse. At Clervaux the Command Post of the 110th US Regiment was situated at the Claravallis Hotel. By 3 p.m. the Germans had surrounded Clervaux and the Clerve river running through the town had



Above: The present-day bridge rebuilt in the '50s at Dasburg which forms the border between Germany and Luxembourg. It was here that Manteuffel directed the traffic. Note the sign, common to all German bridges today, giving the class for wheeled transport and tanks—the Dasburg bridge would still take a Tiger tank one way! Below: The Claravallis Hotel in Clervaux.

been crossed by a Panzer and a Panzerfaust (bazooka) team who set fire to a Sherman parked outside the hotel. Attacks continued throughout the day. The 2nd Panzer Division finally overcame American resistance, the town fell leaving the way open to Bastogne.

In the south, the only non-Panzer Army, the Seventh commanded by Brandenburger, had made smaller gains near Echternach.

The race for Bastogne

When the news of the German attack reached the Supreme Allied Commander Eisenhower later in the day, in conference at Versailles, he has recorded his instant conviction that this was not a local attack but a major last ditch offensive on behalf of the Germans and he reacted accordingly.

The immediate reserves to hand were the 7th Armoured Division in the north which was ordered to proceed to St. Vith in the centre, where it arrive in the nick of time to counter German attacks, and the 10th Armoured Division from Patton's 3rd army in the south who rushed Combat Command B into Bastogne.

Bastogne was the headquarters of VIII Corps commanded by General Middleton, the actual HQ being situated in a former German barracks at the north-west edge of the town. Being the centre of the road-network on the German line of advance, if Bastogne could be held it would reduce the chance of success for the Germans in reaching the Meuse.

On December 17, it was decided at SHAEF HQ to commit the other two reserve divisions, the 82nd and the 101st Airborne divisions. Initially, it was intended to send both to Bastogne and there was a confusion of orders before the 82nd was sent north to Werbomont to block the route to Liege. Liege, the largest supply town on the continent, was thought to be the German goal together with the towns en route containing stores of two million maps (at Stavelot) and 2½ million gallons of petrol (near Spa).

The 101st Airborne Division, 'The Screaming Eagles' veterans of Normandy and Holland, were to play, together with a small group of engineers from the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion in the north, a decisive part in the defeat of the German offensive in the Ardennes.

General von Luttwitz, commander of 47th Panzer Corps en route to Bastogne from the opposite direction to the 101st, listening to an American broadcast on Sunday December 17, heard that the 101st was 100 miles away from Bastogne. With Panzer Lehr's 26th Volksgrenadiers only 15 miles away the race would seem uneven — and this was true had it not been for the delaying actions of three teams from Combat Command B who were sent to set up road blocks north, north-east and east of Bastogne by Colonel Roberts whose headquarters was situated at the Hotel Le brun, Bastogne.

In the north Team Desobry went to Noville, Team O'Hara east to Wardin, with Team Cherry between them at Longvilly. Lieutenant-Colonel Cherry had placed an advance guard 1000 yards west of Longvilly next to St. Michaels Grotto, a roadside shrine. Each Team took its name from its commander.

Troy Middleton had previously set up scratch road blocks further out on the north-east road, the N12, called Task Force Rose and Harper, but both were overcome. The survivors fell back to Longvilly.

These three teams were the only real defence Bastogne had until the 101st arrived, even then thundering through the night towards Bastogne, 11,000 men in 380 big open trucks, risking air attacks with lights blazing.

Above: The petrol dump on the Francorchamps road from Stavelot which was guarded by the Belgians (IWM). Below: The Hotel Lebrun in Bastogne, HQ of Colonel Roberts as it appears today.

Below: The grotto of St. Michael, west of Longvilly which was the scene of the battle between Panzer Lehr and Team Cherry on December 18.

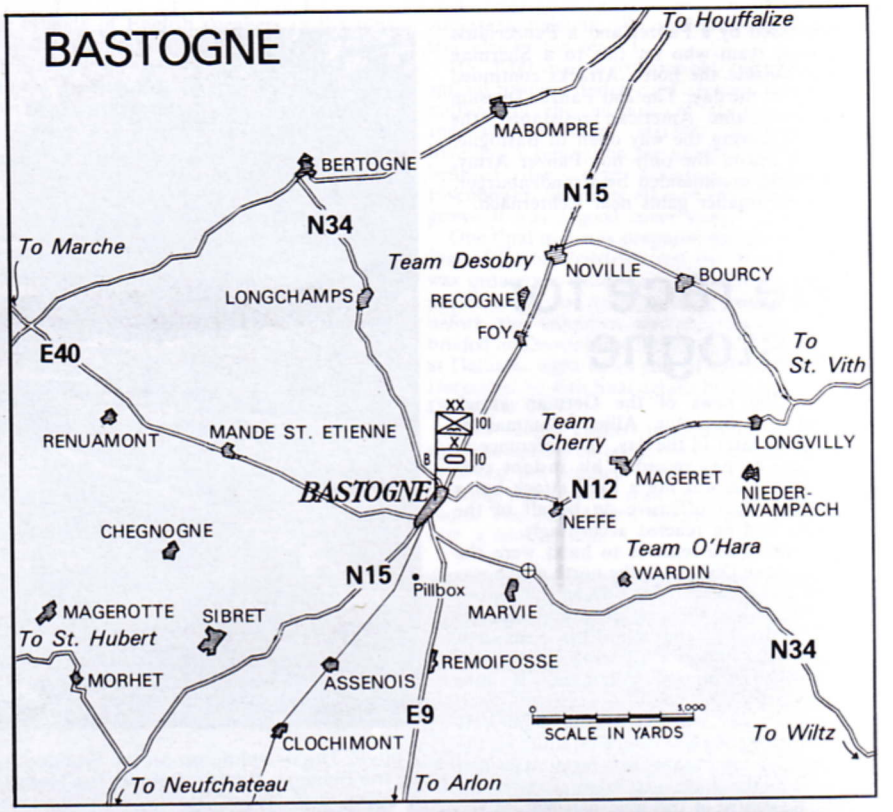
At 10 p.m. on December 18 the advance columns of Panzer Lehr driving through dense fog had reached a small village just inside the Luxembourg border 10 kilometres from Bastogne called Niederwampach. At the head was Major-General Fritz Bayerlein in an armoured half track. All day he had been struggling over secondary roads and he was expected to take Bastogne that night. He stopped and examined his map. He had three choices. South to the N34 or north to the N12, both roads which were probably heavily defended, or straight ahead, bypassing both to Mageret. He chose the latter.

Followed by fifteen tanks and infantry in half tracks he headed for Mageret. After a little way the paved road became dirt which petered out into a farm track. Too late to turn back, he pressed on leaving bogged vehicles where they stalled. He arrived in Mageret four hours later where he stumbled onto American trucks and ambulances. After capturing what turned out to be a hospital unit, he was incorrectly told by a civilian that a large force of Americans had just passed by on the N12 to his rear. He hesitated apprehensive in the fog and then turned back to attack the Americans in his rear at Longvilly — Team Cherry.

A great line of stalled American vehicles were packed along the N12 retreating west. At 2pm Bayerlein opened his attack. At the first few shots from his tanks, the American vehicles were abandoned and without a show of resistance the men scattered towards Bastogne. All except the lone Team Cherry. The advance guard at the roadside grotto fought the Volksgrenadiers tenaciously. By 3.30pm the battle was over. At the grotto many American tanks, armoured cars, guns and jeeps burned brightly. Scores of dead GIs sprawled among the stone ornaments of the grotto. Nearly two hundred vehicles had been destroyed but the Germans had paid a high price—a day's delay by which time the 101st had reached Bastogne.

The other two teams had fought equally gallant delaying actions.

Team O'Hara with thirty tanks and five hundred men were positioned on the N34 just south of Wardin initially found only American stragglers retreating through the village — Panzer Lehr having bypassed them by going across country. Wardin had been captured from the Germans on September 10 and until



Right: The beginning of the road from Niederwampach to Magaret taken by Major-General Bayerlein. Bottom: The stone post marks the Luxembourg-Belgian border at which stage the road is only a track. Bottom right: Eventually the track becomes a muddy path, but by now it was too late for Bayerlein to turn back.

December 17, had housed an American platoon.

Team O'Hara shelled the first German tanks as they entered Wardin. Then after the Germans counter attacked fearing an outflanking manoeuvre the O'Hara Team withdrew to Marvie. For the next month this particular battle continued, the Americans advancing and being beaten back several times. Not until January 16 was the village permanently in US hands after 80 percent of the houses had been destroyed.

Major Desobry's team the last to go into action, was sent to Noville on the N15 the road to Houffalize, and was in position only just in time. After a morning of sporadic tank attacks, at 10am the dense morning fog suddenly lifted as if like a curtain rising on a set stage to expose lines of German tanks surrounding him. To the left of the N15, fourteen German tanks scurried along a hillside looking for cover; ten were knocked out. Later in the day after just having been reinforced by a battalion of paratroopers Major Desobry was badly wounded.

However the 101st 'Screaming Eagles' had by now reached Bastogne. In the absence of their commander, General Maxwell Taylor, they were commanded by Brigadier-General Anthony McAuliffe. His HQ was established in the barracks opposite the town cemetery.

By the night of December 20, the Germans completed the encirclement of Bastogne by cutting the road to Neufchateau. General McAuliffe himself was one of the last to travel on the road when German tanks cut it half an hour later.

At this stage all the forces within Bastogne the 101st, Combat Command B, and American troops who had retreated from the east, were placed under the General's command.

Top: This picture was taken at Noville after the Germans had retreated north to Houffalize. The Germans were using captured US equipment when bombed by the Ninth Air Force. Note the StuG 3 assault gun dug in to fire down the road to Bastogne (IWM). Below: Our comparison taken at Noville crossroads in 1974. The building on the right is the village church.

'Nuts!'

Above: Picture of Major-General Maxwell Taylor (left) congratulating Brigadier-General McAuliffe taken after the battle outside the Belgian barrack building used during the siege for General McAuliffe's HQ (IWM).

At 11.30 am on December 22 four Germans, a major, a captain and two enlisted men, came up the road to Bastogne from Remoifosse carrying a large white flag. They were met on the road by T/Sgt. Oswald Y. Butler and S/Sgt. Carl E. Dickinson of Company F, 327th Glider Infantry, and Pfc. Ernest D. Premetz of the 327th Medical Detachment.

Premetz could speak German. The captain could speak English. He said to Butler, "We are parlementaires."

The men took the Germans to the house where Lieutenant Leslie E. Smith of Weapons Platoon, Company F, 327th Infantry, had his command post. Leaving the two German enlisted men at the command post, Smith blindfolded the two officers and led them over the hill to the command post of Capt. James F. Adams, commanding officer of Company F. Adams called 2nd Battalion headquarters in Marvie, Battalion called Regiment in Bastogne, and the 327th Headquarters called the 101st Division, relaying the word that some Germans had come in with surrender terms. The rumour quickly spread around the front that *the enemy* had had enough and that a party had arrived to arrange a surrender. Many of the American defenders crawled out of their cover.

Major Alvin Jones took the terms to General McAuliffe and Lietenant-Colonel Ned D. Moore who was acting Chief of Staff. The paper called for the surrender of the Bastogne garrison and threatened its complete destruction otherwise. It appealed to the "well known American humanity" to save the people of Bastogne from further suffering. The Americans were to have two hours in which to consider. The two enemy officers would have to be released by 2 p.m. but another hour would pass before the Germans would resume their attack.

Colonel Harper, commanding the 327th, went with Jones to Division Headquarters. The two German officers were left with Captain Adams. Members of the staff were grouped around General McAuliffe when Harper and Jones arrived. McAuliffe asked someone what the paper contained and was told that it requested a surrender.

He laughed and said, "Aw, nuts!" It really seemed funny to him at the time. He figured he was giving the Germans "one hell of a beating" and that all of his men knew it. The demand was all out of line with the existing situation.

But McAuliffe realized that some kind of reply had to be made and he sat down to think it over. Pencil in hand, he sat there pondering for a few minutes and then he remarked, "Well, I don't know what to tell them." He asked the staff what they thought and Colonel Kinnard, his G-3 replied, "That first remark of yours would be hard to beat."

General McAuliffe didn't understand immediately what Kinnard was referring to. Kinnard reminded him, "You said 'Nuts!' " That drew applause all around. All members of the staff agreed with much enthusiasm and because of their approval McAuliffe decided to send that message back to the Germans.

Then he called Colonel Harper in and asked him how he would reply to the message. Harper thought for a minute but before he could compose anything General McAuliffe gave him the paper on which he had written his one-word reply and asked, "Will you see that it's delivered?" "I will deliver it myself," answered Harper. "It will be a lot of fun." McAuliffe told him not to go into the German lines.

Colonel Harper returned to the command post of Company F. The two Germans were standing in the wood blindfolded and under guard. Harper said, "I have the American commander's reply."

The German captain asked, "Is it written or verbal?"

"It is written," said Harper.

The German captain translated the message. The major then asked, "Is the reply negative or affirmative? If it is the latter I will negotiate further."

All this time the Germans were acting in an upstage and patronizing manner. Colonel Harper was beginning to lose his temper. He said, "The reply is decidedly not affirmative." Then he added, "If you continue this foolish attack your losses will be tremendous." The major nodded his head.

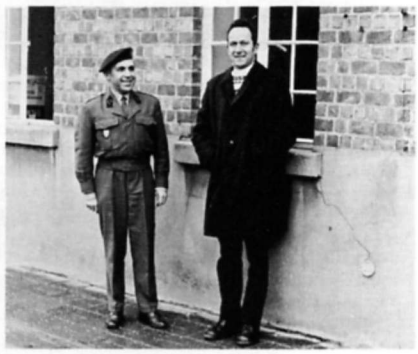
Harper put the two officers in the jeep and took them back to the main road where the German privates were waiting with the white flag.

He then removed the blindfold and said to them, speaking through the German captain, "If you don't understand what 'Nuts' means, in plain English it is the same as 'Go to hell.' And I will tell you something else —if you continue to attack we will kill every goddam German that tries to break into this city."

The German major and captain saluted very stiffly. The captain said, "We will kill many Americans. This is war." It was then 1.50 p.m.

"On your way, Bud," said Colonel Harper, "and good luck to you."

The four Germans walked on down the road. Harper returned to the house, regretting that his tongue had slipped and that he had wished them good luck.



Above: Our comparison picture outside the same barrack building. Pictured are the present garrison's public relations officer (by whose permission the editor was able to visit the barracks), and Monsieur Heintz. Below: The farm which was the command post of Company F — where the Germans were taken with the surrender demand. Shell damage has been crudely repaired.

Bastogne–The Square

Top: GIs of the 4th Armoured Division inspect vehicles lining Bastogne Square after breaking the siege (IWM). Above left: The square now renamed Place General McAuliffe in January 1974. Above right and right: Compare the devastation and wreckage in the square in 1944 (IWM) with the neat row of vehicles in 1974. Below: At one corner of the square an M4 Sherman knocked out on January 2, 1945 during the battle at Renuamont has been set up, one of the few the editor has found still mounting the .5 in turret machine gun.

Left: Two days after Christmas 1944, Bastogne Square looked lik this. The notice in the centre says 'Unattended vehicles will b impounded by Military Police' (IWM). Above: No parkin problems at Christmas 1973, just a request to visit 'Nuts museum.

Above and left: During the battle some civilians evacuated th town centre (IWM). In our comparison, incredibly, the ol German signs painted on the brickwork can still be seen 30 year later.

Above and right: Bastogne Square. Telephone lines are down and a camouflaged Sherman is parked on the road to Neufchateau (IWM). Now, clean and tidy, a busy cross roads. Below: Americans killed during the siege were buried in the town cemetery directly opposite General McAuliffe's barrack HQ (IWM). On February 4, 1945 the Americans began reburial of their men together with German dead in Recogne cemetery. Three years later the Americans were transferred to Henri-Chapelle and Recogne was given over entirely to German soldiers. Our exact comparison of the town cemetery was taken in 1974.

Left: The original railway bridge on the E40 as it enters Bastogne was blown in the retreat in May 1940. The bridge in the picture was built by the Germans to replace it (IWM). Above: Now rebuilt again, photographed today.

Left: 101st Airborne troops pass dead comrades killed on December 25, 1944 (IWM). Above: The damage to the water tower is still visible in 1974.

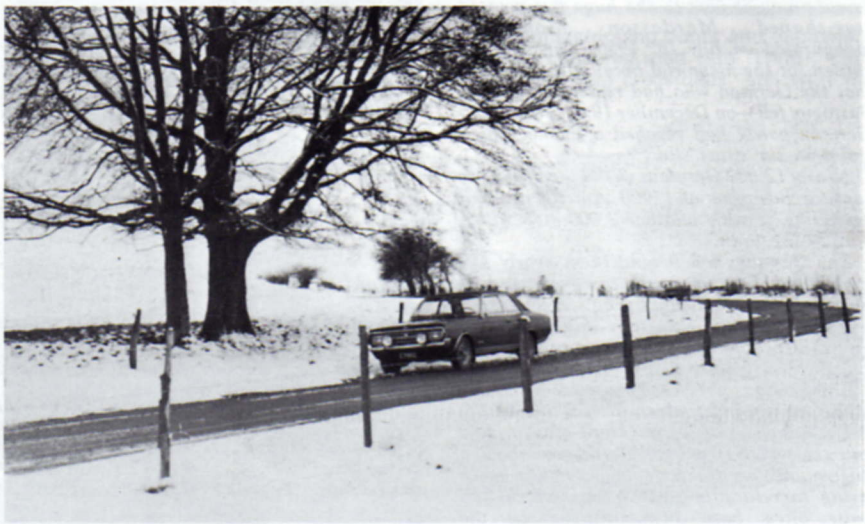
Left: 28th Division stragglers caught in Bastogne are gathered opposite Colonel Roberts' HQ in the Hotel Lebrun (IWM). Above: Chapelle, the electrician has gone and the building on the left now forms part of the hotel garage.

Left: The hotel garage is on the left and the jeep on the right is standing outside Colonel Roberts' HQ. Note the cow! Above: Our comparison with Christmas trees on the pavement.

Left: The Grand Rue is Bastogne's main shopping centre. Thi picture was taken on December 26 during German shellin (IWM). Above: Many of the buildings lining the street had to b rebuilt but a comparison is still possible.

AUX DEUX BOUCHERS
AUBERGE
AUX 4 SAISONS
AUBERGE
AUX 4 SAISONS
AUBERGE
AUX 4 SAISON

Patton's 4th Armoured to the rescue



Top: A knocked-out jeep on the dirt road to Chaumont is passed by a half-track of the 4th Armoured Division on its way to relieve Bastogne (IWM). Above: This fascinating comparison was taken by one of our Luxembourg readers, M. Pierre Eicher, who located the same tree over thirty years later.

Following the rejection by General McAuliffe of the surrender demand, Bastogne was supplied from the air with parachute drops on December 23 and 24. Clear weather also enabled the Allied air force to bomb German troop concentrations. By night the Germans retaliated with the bombing of Bastogne. By the day after Christmas, the 4th Armoured Divison was ready.

General George S. Patton had committed 4th Armoured Division to the breakthrough from the south to relieve encircled Bastogne. Columns from Martelange, Witre and Neufchateau were converging on the town through the German 5th Parachute Division. The final breakthrough was made by Combat Command R supported by 94th Armoured Field Artillery and the 37th Tank Battalion with twenty Sherman tanks.—The route lay via Remichampagne and Clochimont. At 3 p.m. on December 26 with daylight failing, instead of a planned attack to the north-west to Sibret it was decided to make a direct dash via Assenois a mile away, when they would then be only three miles from Bastogne. The 101st Airborne in Bastogne was warned that friendly tanks were approaching on the Assenois road. Eight Shermans followed by half tracks headed the column.

In the leading tank was Lieutenant Charles Boggess who called for the pre-arranged artillery bombardment of Assenois at 4.45 p.m. The American tanks burst into the village, whilst the US shells were still landing and one half track was destroyed. Hand to hand fighting developed with the defenders but Lieutenant Boggess pushed straight through, firing 22 shots in quick succession from his 75 mm gun in the process, followed by two Shermans, a half track, which had got caught in the column, and two more Shermans. The heavily-loaded half track couldn't keep up with the lead tanks and a gap in the column was created. Taking advantage of this some Germans spread Teller mines on the road — the half track hit one and was destroyed. The crew of the following Sherman pulled the mines aside and pressed on to catch up with Lieutenant Boggess.

The last German strongpoint on this road was a concrete pillbox painted green which received three shots from the 75 mm gun of Boggess' tank. A hundred yards further on Lieutenant Boggess stopped and shouted 'Come here! This is the 4th Armoured.' After a pause a single figure came forward.

'I'm Lieutenant Webster of the 326th Engineers, 101st Airborne Division. Glad to see you.'

Monsieur Joss Heintz, editor of the L'Avenir du Luxembourg newspaper and author of the book 'In the perimeter of Bastogne' pointed out to the editor the same pillbox attacked by Lieutenant Boggess which still shows traces of green paint and the marks of the three shots. He remembers passing by it the day after the battle and seeing about twenty dead Germans surrounding it.

Above: The pillbox still showing the marks of the three shots fired by Lieutenant Boggess, stands beside the road from Assenois to Bastogne.

Above: General McAuliffe with his wife return to Bastogne on the 25th anniversary of the battle (J. Heintz).

Bastogne suffered heavily in the bombing and shelling and our comparison pictures show how the reconstruction has altered the buildings surrounding the square. The Hotel Lebrun, Colonel Roberts HQ, received several hits and the garage opposite where the 'Battered Bastards of Bastogne' notice was displayed has been rebuilt although not to an exact replica of the earlier building.

Bastogne almost has a monopoly on the word 'Nuts' taken from the surrender message and the Nuts Museum, Nuts Camping and Nuts memorials remind the present day visitor of the affection with which the townspeople have towards the 101st Airborne Division. A new museum building is to be opened in the coming months next to the huge five-pointed star-shaped Mardasson Monument inaugurated on July 16, 1950. The site was chosen for the memorial because it was there that the German who had reached closest to Bastogne fell—on December 19 a member of a German patrol had reached a thicket which stood on the exact site.

Nearly 12,000 Germans were killed trying to capture Bastogne and 900 Americans died defending it with another 3,000 men killed outside the town.

The Germans left behind them nearly 450 tanks and armoured vehicles surrounding Bastogne, the Americans losing 150 tanks and vehicles. Although electricity was restored to the townspeople in April, some surrounding villages went nearly a year without light.

More serious were the thousands of mines, shells and grenades which littered the battle-field. Ammunition of all kinds was prolific and the whole Ardennes sector resembled a huge munitions dump. Villagers risked death trying to return to their homes which had quite often been booby-trapped by the retreating Germans—even corpses were mined.

Over forty civilians were killed around Bastogne in the first five months of 1945, half being children under fifteen. Posters were displayed aimed at stopping children touching ammunition and in April 1945, a thousand man team arrived to begin clearance. By September when it was officially announced that the Ardennes was clear of mines, 5,800 tons of ammunition had been removed together with 114,000 mines. The price had been high—fourteen men killed and forty-eight injured.

However the optimistic message stating complete clearance was far from correct—in the years that followed more children were to die and even today mines are unearthed—and as our front cover shows even tanks remain just as they were, pushed off the road thirty years ago.

Below: The Grand Rue in 1944 as supplies move through the liberated town (IWM), and (above) as it appears from the same balcony today.

Above: A captured photograph showing German troops stripping boots and equipment from American dead in Honsfeld. Note the German censored road sign (IWM). Left: Obersturmbannfuhrer Jochen Peiper. Below: The Honsfeld crossroads, still with the drinking trough, photographed by the editor in 1974.

Kampfgruppe Peiper

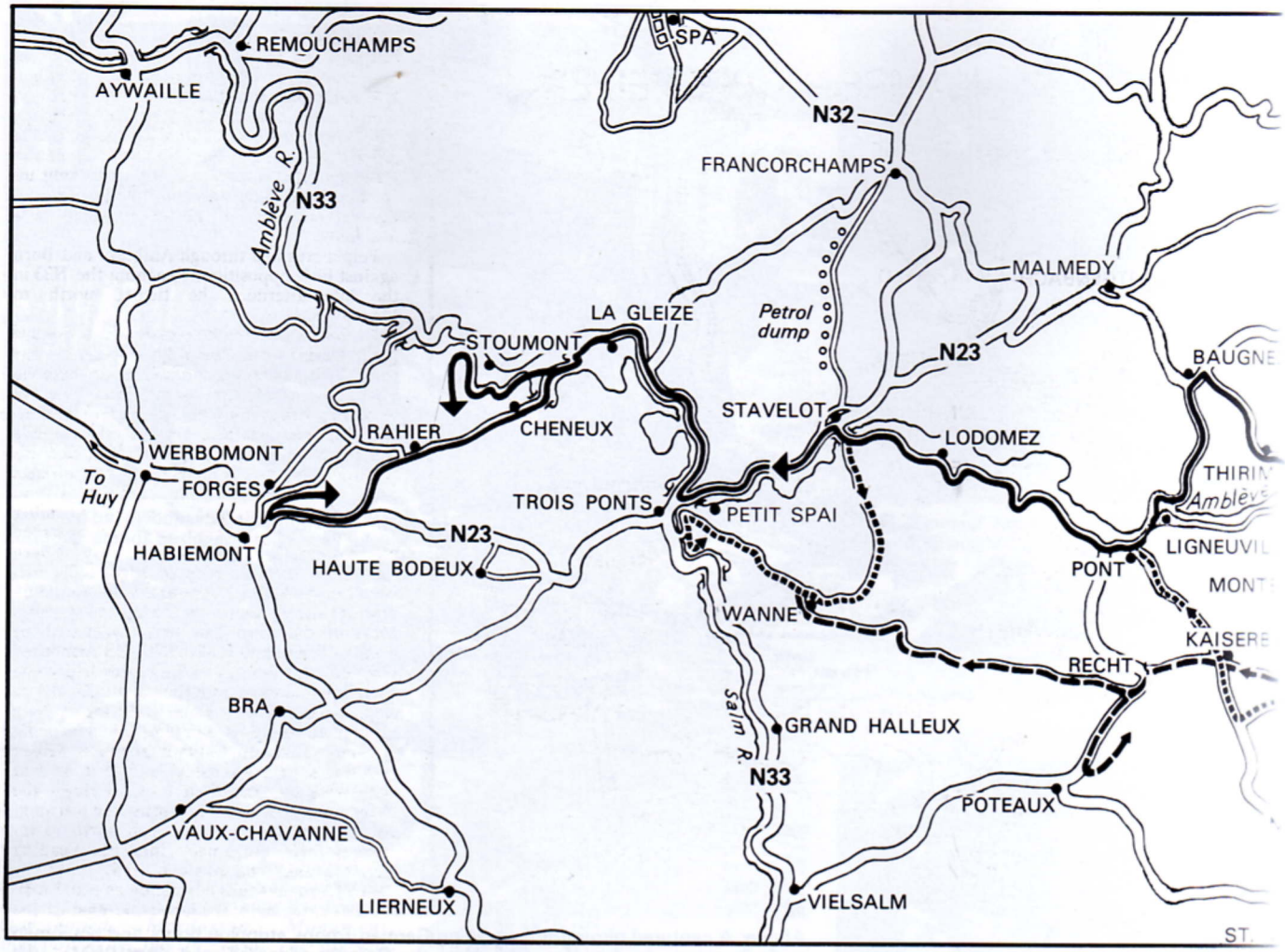
At a conference on December 14, the regimental commanders of the 1st SS Panzer Division, the Liebstandarte Adolf Hitler, were given to understand that they had the most important role in the entire offensive and, that within the Liebstandarte the key spearhead thrust was to be given to a strong combat group commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Jochen Peiper, thereafter, perhaps notoriously, known as Kampfgruppe Peiper. He had around 100 Mark IV tanks and Mark V Panthers and a battalion of 42 King Tigers. Infantry support was provided by the fully motorised 3rd Battalion of the 2nd SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment, with armoured self-propelled guns commanded by Major Josef Diefenthal.

A group of Skorzeny's special units consisting of around 500 men, with Sherman tanks and Panthers plated over to look like Shermans, about thirty lorries and some jeeps were attached to this Kampfgruppe although Peiper had no control over them. They were intended to be at the head of the column but in the event never had the opportunity to play the part expected of them.

Because of insufficient petrol supplies, Peiper was issued with maps of the American dumps at Spa and Bullingen with instructions to supply himself with captured petrol as he advanced. A dump north of Stavelot which could have played an important part in the battle was not marked.

In the north, the advance of the 1st SS Panzer Division the Liebstandarte Adolf Hitler, and Skorzeny's 150th Panzer Brigade both ensnarled in each other on the N32 south of Losheimergraben, was held up awaiting vital bridging equipment. The railway bridge just inside the German/Belgian border had been blown up during the German retreat and had not been rebuilt, consequently the road soon became jammed with vehicles. Peiper himself arrived on the scene at 2.30 p.m. and was so angered at the whole mess that he ordered his own column, now led personally by himself, to ruthlessly move on, shouldering anything and everything that got in its way off the road. When he reached the railway bridge, he found a place where the bank was shallower and led his column down and across the tracks and up the far side. By evening he was back on the main road to Losheim.

Peiper had been a Himmler adjutant and was commander of a tank battalion in Russia which had become known as the Blowtorch



Map of the advance of Kampfgruppe Peiper. Main route shown with a solid line, diversionary routes dotted and the Southern march group, dashed line.

Battalion because allegedly it burned two villages, killing all the inhabitants. This same ruthlessness was to mark the march of Kampfgruppe Peiper across Belgium. The map on this page shows the route taken by the Peiper group. Small diversions were made en route but his direction lay due west — to the Meuse.

Peiper reached Lanzerath at 11 p.m., and at 5 a.m. on December 17 reached Buchholz. As he moved out of the village towards Honsfeld he found the road full of retreating American vehicles. It was here he held up his column waiting for a gap and then calmly merged into the American vehicles. Paratroopers walked beside each tank guiding them with white handkerchiefs.

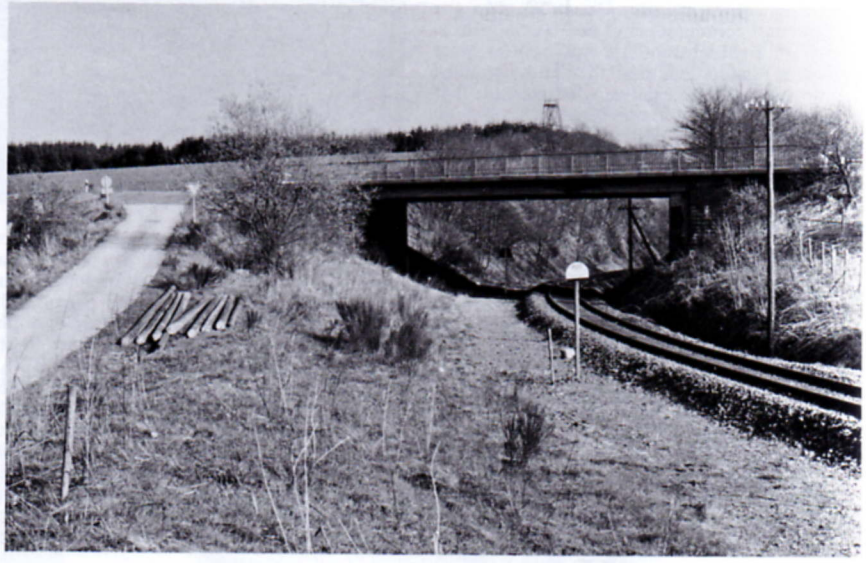
Honsfeld was a rest area for the 394th Regiment of the 99th US Infantry Division. The big Panthers rolled up the streets, the German paratroopers riding on the tanks jumped off rounding up GIs. Some Americans fled, others were killed or captured. Peiper has said that they took much booty here including sixty vehicles and fifteen anti-tank guns. A photograph was taken at this spot of German troops looting the bodies of dead Americans and our comparison picture shows the Honsfeld crossroads today. It was here that the trail of massacres by his troops started with the shooting of nineteen Americans who had surrendered.

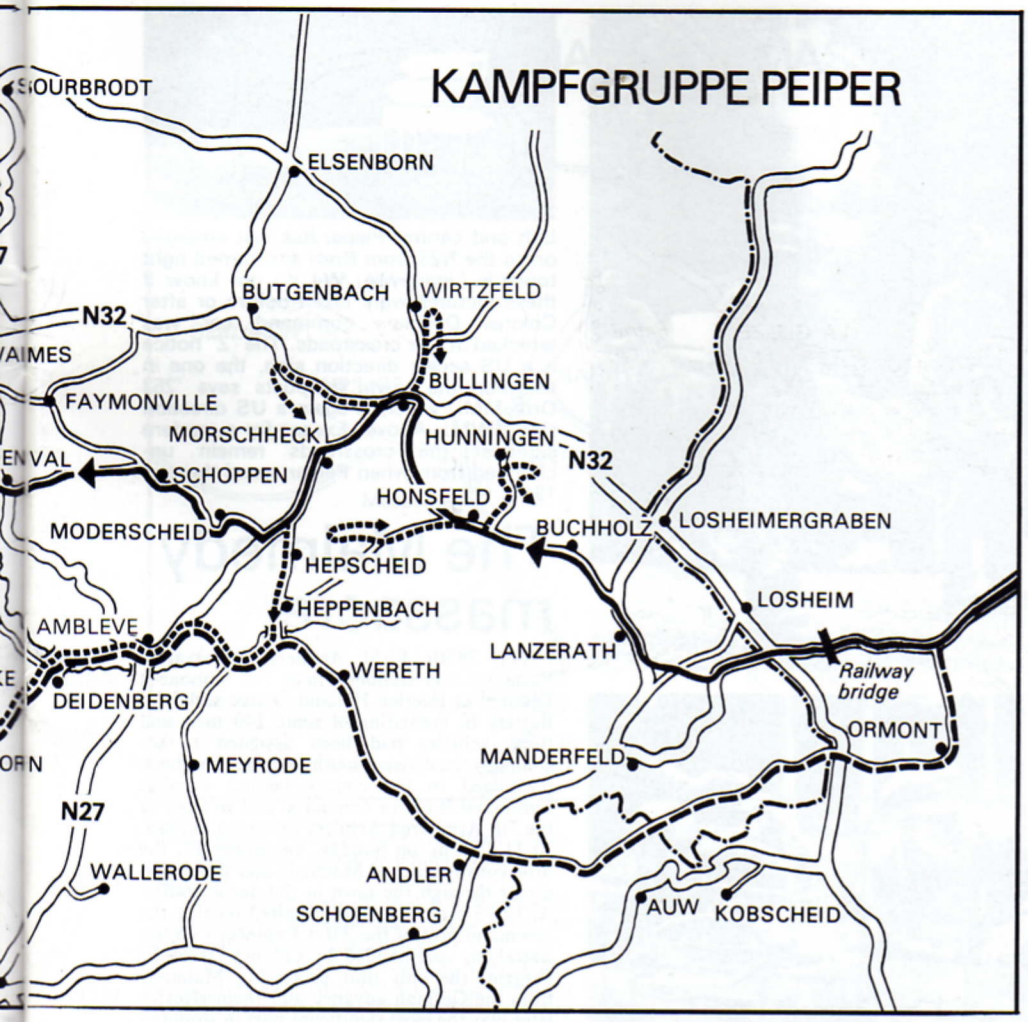
To his west at Ligneuville lay the 49th AAA Brigade HQ totalling about 400 men, controlling the surrounding batteries deployed in the area to shoot down the flying bombs aimed at Liege. Peiper learnt of this from a captured GI and decided to split his column to complete an envelopment of Ligneuville. He also decided to move via Bullingen (not a road assigned to his advance) to refuel at an American petrol dump he knew he would find there.

Several of Peiper's Mark IV tanks were knocked out at Bullingen by the 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion who had dug in with some engineers 1,000 yards west on some high ground. As Peiper neared Bullingen he overran a small airfield near Morschneck used by observation planes, destroying twelve aircraft. At Bullingen refuelling started at 9 a.m., fifty captured GI's being forced to fill all his tanks (Peiper claims to have captured 50,000 gallons at Bullingen). As the advanced elements of the Peiper Kampfgruppe moved out towards Ambleve, the fifty Americans and one civilian were shot, their usefulness to Peiper at an end.

South of Morschneck Peiper divided his

Below: The bridge over the railway line near Losheim as it appears today. The Germans destroyed it when retreating earlier and the delay in bridging it held up Peiper and Skorzeny.





column (see map). He led one group, mostly consisting of Panthers, south on his assigned route, whilst the other used minor roads to approach Ligneuville from the north with a few Panthers and Mark IV's. The northern group was commanded by Major Poetschke with Major Josef Diefenthal in charge of the 3rd Battalion of the 2nd SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment of armoured infantry. This split up is important when we come to the most infamous massacre of all at Baugnez near Malmedy.

Peiper steamed through Ambleve and Born against little opposition. Reaching the N23 in the late afternoon he turned north to Ligneuville.

At the Kaiserbaracke crossroads, a Colonel Mark Devine with some of his staff on his way to St. Vith was taking a roundabout route via Recht to avoid the tremendous jam of retreating American vehicles on the Vielsalm-St. Vith road. He ran straight into Peiper's column moving north, was fired on and his command car wrecked. He and two officers escaped on foot. Two photographs exist of Peiper at this cross-roads taken on December 17 which are reproduced here. The crossroad remains exactly as it was except for a modern road sign. But the race to Ligneuville had been won by Major Diefenthal's 3rd Battalion now advancing south via the northern route. Most of the town had been evacuated by Combat Command R of the 7th US Armoured Division. At 1.45 p.m. a bulldozer had come barreling into town from the north. The driver stopped outside the Hotel du Moulin long enough to shout a warning of advancing German tanks, to Captain Seymour Green who was standing outside, and that he had been fired on, and then tore off down the street and out of town. Following the warning, Green promptly drove his jeep north to investigate. He ran smack into the Leading German tanks and was captured.

The German tanks advancing as usual with all guns firing entered Ligneuville against the only opposition of a lone Sherman, its tracks removed for repairs, standing outside the Hotel du Moulin. Only ten minutes previously General Timberlake, commander of the 49th AAA Brigade had left the hotel. Here a further eight prisoners were shot behind the hotel. At the southern edge of the town the Germans lost a Panther and two armoured cars to the rear elements of the 9th Armoured Division moving to St. Vith.

General Wilhelm Mohnke, commander of 1st SS Panzer Division, then arrived at the hotel to await Peiper. Fortunately the retreating US vehicles passed the Kaiserbaracke crossroads before Peiper emerged on to the N23 from Born.

Top left: Private Walter Brewer of the US 1st Division examines a rubber boat found in a knocked-out half-track of Peiper's Kampfgruppe after the Americans had recaptured Ambleve (IWM). Below left: Our comparison taken in Ambleve, now called Amel, in January 1974. Below: The Hotel du Moulin as it appears today. A memorial to further American prisoners shot behind the hotel, stands in the foreground.

Below: The N23/32 south of Malmedy. Madame Bodarwe's cafe is on the left of the road by the crossroads. Battery B had turned right on to this road and were proceeding towards our photographer's position when the Germans attacked from the right across what was then an open field. The ditch where the Americans sheltered still runs on the left of the road.

Left and centre: Peiper has just emerged on to the N23 from Born and turned right towards Ligneuville. We do not know if these pictures were taken before or after Colonel Devine's command car was wrecked at this crossroads. The 'Z' notice is a US sector direction sign, the one in between the town signposts says '253 Ord. MM.' which is again a US direction sign (IWM). Above: Except for a modern signpost the crossroads remain unchanged from when Peiper stood there in 1944.

The Malmedy massacre

The 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion was stationed near 7th Armoured Division at Heerlen Holland. Three serials of Battery B, consisting of some 140 men and thirty vehicles had been assigned to accompany the division south and they had been positioned in the convoy behind Combat Command R of 7th Armoured and in front of the 7th Armoured Artillery following behind. At 11.45 a.m. on Sunday, December 17, the little convoy reached Malmedy and proceeded slowly through the town in the dense traffic. At 12.15 p.m. the column halted outside the command post of the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion, commanded by Colonel David E. Pergrin, the only unit protecting Malmedy from the German advance and themselves to later play the most significant part in stopping Peiper's advance.

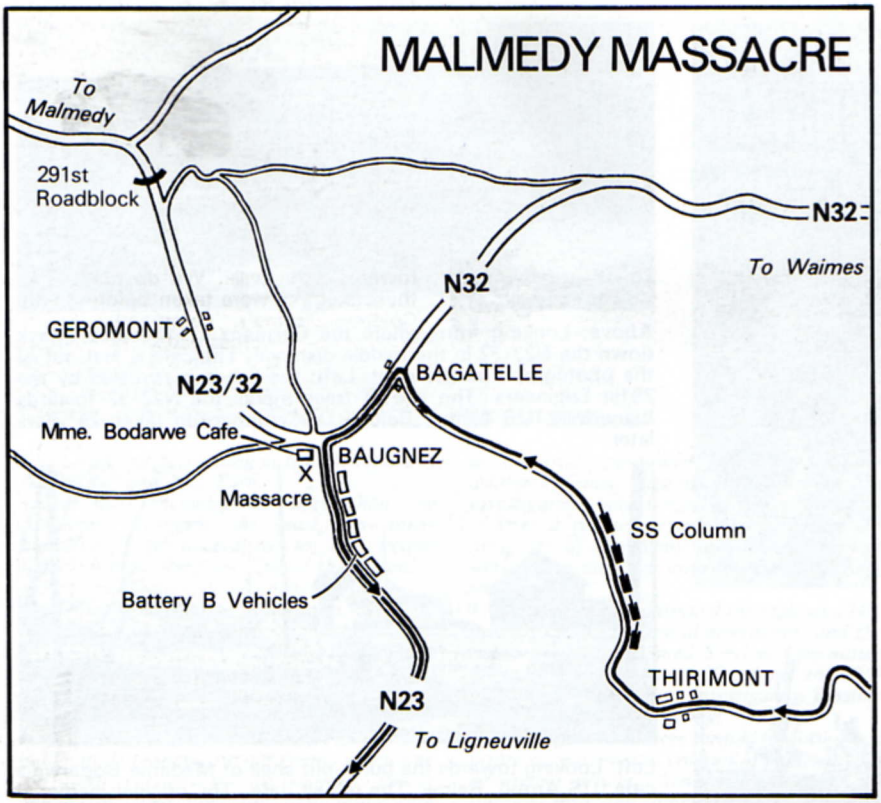
In the lead jeep was Lieutenant Virgil T. Lary and he informed Pergrin of his proposed route. Pergrin advised him to change it and go via Stavelot because of the news of German tanks at Bullingen. But the captain with Lary who had the responsibility of keeping the convoy in its route slot decided to take the risk, fearing that if they were diverted they may never get back in line. The little column therefore moved out of Malmedy south on the N32 towards the advancing northern wing of Peiper's Kampfgruppe.

After passing through a 291st Engineer road block they slowly ground up the steep hill then descended to the crossroads at Baugnez called by the GIs in Malmedy, 'Five Points' because it was a five road intersection (see map opposite).

On the corner was the cafe home of Madame Adele Bodarwe, where two military policemen from the 518th MP Detachment were on duty. After Combat Command R had passed through one MP had gone to Malmedy for lunch pending the arrival of the next convoy. The MP remaining on duty was Pfc. Homer Ford.

As the leading jeep of Lieutenant Lary approached, it was waved onto the correct road by the MP. Ahead Lary saw a bulldozer dawdling along. When the last vehicle (an ambulance belonging to the 26th Infantry Regiment who had tacked on the rear of the convoy) had passed, Ford, his duties completed, turned to enter the cafe.

Suddenly there came the sound of tank cannon fire and he turned to see Battery B now some three hundred yards down the road under fire. A German armoured column coming north on the secondary road had bracketed the convoy with fire, blowing the wheels off a leading lorry. Germans



dismounting from the tanks stormed across the open field firing machine pistols and rifles.

The bulldozer took off as if it had sprouted wings and as we know gave the warning to Captain Green at Ligneuville.

A ditch ran beside the road (as it still does) on the side away from the attacking Germans and from this ditch a half-hearted defence was put up until it was seen by Lary to be futile. Tanks were now coming down the road from the crossroads pushing vehicles off the road, several men had already been killed and their rifles and carbines were useless against the tanks who were now machine-gunning the vehicles, setting them on fire.

Lary gave the word to stop firing and stood up to lead the surrender. Some men had run back to the cross roads and were hiding behind the cafe with the MP Ford.

Major Diefenthal then rolled up in a half track and the firing died away. The Germans searched the surrendering Americans and then marched back to the crossroads and herded them into an open field next to the cafe. They were made to line up in eight rows—approximately 120 men had surrendered. One of those who didn't was Warren Schmidt who lay covered with mud and weeds in a little stream nearby. Ford and the other men who had hidden in an outbuilding behind the cafe had been spotted and were rounded up and put with the rest. The two men in the ambulance were the last two to be marched into the field.

Major Diefenthal then got the German column moving, leaving Major Poetschke in charge. The latter pulled two Mark IV tanks out of the column No.731 and 732 and had them manoeuvred so the field and prisoners were covered by their guns.

The commander of tank 731, Sergeant Hans Siptrott was then ordered to open fire on the prisoners. Siptrott in turn ordered his assistant gunner, Private George Fleps who already had his pistol out to start shooting. The latter took careful aim at Lieutenant Lary's driver and fired. The time was a few minutes after 2 p.m.

As the Americans started shouting, Lary called for them to stand fast in case they made a break and invite further fire. However within seconds the machine guns of both tanks opened fire, traversing the columns of men back and forth. Tank 731 was the first to break off the shooting and move off but 732 continued to spray the fallen figures. Tank 732 then moved off down the road but as other vehicles and tanks rolled by, machine guns on the vehicles raked the bodies and rifles were fired by those in the vehicles. When the firing ceased men of the German Pioneer unit entered the field and finished off any soldier with signs of life. One group of men were shot five times each by Private Gustav Sprenger.

The Germans then left some men to guard the cross roads and moved off. Those incredibly still alive, about twenty including Lary who had two wounds and Ford shot once, whispered to each other about making a break. Private James Massara by a miracle unscathed led the men who suddenly staggered to their feet and ran towards the woods to the north.

The Germans at the crossroads, dumfounded, opened fire with a machine-gun. About twelve men, hearing the firing, swerved towards the cafe. The Germans then set fire to the cafe to flush the men out and shot them as they emerged.

Colonel Pergrin and his men in Malmedy had heard the firing but had not realised the significance. At 2.30 p.m. Pergrin decided to make a reconnaissance towards the crossroads and set out with two soldiers in his jeep. Climbing the hill past the last road block he stopped and mounted some high ground. More machine-gun fire was heard together with shouting. Then four men came running and stumbling through the woods with an

Above: Men of Company C, 291st Engineers begin to uncover the frozen bodies of the victims. Note the troops walking left to right on the snow-covered road (US Army). Below: Our comparison taken from the car park of the cafe shows the road clearly, with the present memorial on the far side of the road.

Above: Looking from where the Germans started their attack down the N23/32 in the middle distance. The cafe is just out of the photograph on the right. Left: the scene is revealed by the 291st Engineers. The line of trees marks the N23/32 towards Ligneuville (US Army). Below: Our comparison taken 29 years later.

Left: Looking towards the burnt-out shell of Madame Bodarwe's cafe (US Army). Below: The rebuilt cafe. The original memorial was erected in what is now the car park.

almost incoherent story. Pergrin horrified took the men back to Malmedy. Thereafter more survivors reached 291st road blocks but it wasn't until after dark that one of the last survivors, Warren Schmidt, who had been hiding in the icy water of the stream reached the road block near the cross-roads. Lieutenant Lary reached Colonel Pergrin's command post at midnight after having collapsed at a farmhouse.

Between 3.30 p.m. and midnight seventeen survivors had reached the 291st. In all there were, incredibly, 43 survivors of the brief skirmish and the massacre which followed. The official record lists 86 men massacred at the crossroads.

Reports of the massacre were received at First Army HQ by 4.30 p.m. Later Pergrin sent a much fuller report when all the survivors rescued by the 291st had come in.

An immediate decision was made to give the event the widest publicity—by midnight it had reached every unit of the First Army and by next day most GIs in the entire US Army were aware of the massacre. This had the opposite effect from that which Hitler had expected when he ordered that the offensive was to be waged ruthlessly and without pity. Instead of dissolving the men of the US Army into cowering, panicky men, it became the psychological turning point. After December 17 the US Army had more than one reason for defeating the enemy—to avenge the men of Malmedy.

This was taken literally by some American troops, for instance an order issued on December 21 by HQ 328th Infantry for an attack scheduled the following day said 'No SS troops or paratroopers will be taken prisoner but will be shot on sight'. And at Chegnogne during a devastating battle in which all the houses were destroyed, the Germans were using the cellar of Monsieur Bernotte's house as a first aid station. The house had been set on fire and as the Germans emerged the first carrying a Red Cross flag, they were shot down at the doorway. Opposite the rebuilt house M. Burnotte pointed out to the editor, the spot where twenty-one German soldiers who had surrendered were shot by the 11th US Armoured Division.

After the war a simple memorial was erected in what is now the car park forecourt to the rebuilt Cafe Bodarwe where the massacre took place. When later the Belgians decided to erect a more permanent memorial they chose to erect it on the wrong side of the road (because it looks better when approaching it from Malmedy!) and the inscription incorrectly reads 'on this spot' and lists only 84 names.

At the end of the war, instructions went out from the American Judge Advocate General's Department to all POW detention camps to retain all men of the First SS Panzer Regiment. Information on the whereabouts of Dietrich and Peiper was considered 'Most urgent'.

Dietrich turned up first in a camp at Wiesbaden having been captured on May 15. But where was Peiper? Most German troops captured would not admit they were SS, let alone give their unit designations.

It was not until August that a newsman from Stars and Stripes published a story that one Lieutenant-Colonel Jochen Peiper was at that moment sitting in a military intelligence centre at Nuremberg. The story was proved to be true although he was not easy to find.

Ten thousand prisoners had to be screened before he was uncovered together with twenty-four other First Panzer SS members. During the next month more suspects were traced in Germany, Austria, France and England. By the end of September nearly 1000 former SS men were in a special camp at Ludwigsburg. Finally seventy-three suspects were transferred to Schwabisch Hall at Landsberg and brought to trial. This began on May 16, 1946 before an all American tribunal (unlike the international tribunal at Nuremberg) lasted two months and among the witnesses who appeared was Lieutenant Lary

(then studying accounting at the University of Kentucky) and Pfc. Ford.

The trial encompassed more than the Malmedy massacre. At least ten other atrocities were accredited to the Peiper Kampfgruppe along the line of the advance, at Honsfeld, Bullingen, Ligneuville, Cheneux, Stavelot, Trois Ponts, Stourmont, Wanne, Lutrebois and Petit Thier.

The total number of victims—308 soldiers and 111 Belgian civilians although the actual total was believed to be three hundred higher.

When the trial ended on July 16, forty-three suspects were sentenced to death, twenty-two to life imprisonment, two for twenty years, one for fifteen years and five for ten years. Peiper and Fleps, who fired the first shot, were among those sentenced to death.

All sentences were subject to a series of reviews by three different boards. By March 1948 the death sentences had been reduced from forty-three to twelve and only fourteen life sentences remained.

Of the men who were to hang, one stay followed another. The SS men gave affidavits claiming confessions had been drawn from them by mock trials, fake executions, beatings and other pressures.

The political atmosphere of the Cold War was also beginning to have effect on the Americans attitude towards their previous enemy who now might be needed as an ally. In May 1948 Willis Everett, chief of the defence at the trial, petitioned the United States Supreme Court alleging brutalities in the investigations and irregularities in the trial.

After a further review appointed by the Secretary of the Army the death sentences were commuted to imprisonment on September 14.

The arguments continued throughout 1949, being taken up by several newspapers and the case went to the Armed Services Committee for further consideration. On April 18, 1949 the committee began to investigate a possible case against the US Army!

The original massacre seemed forgotten in a furore of statements, counter statements and newspaper articles. Senator McCarthy then stepped into the limelight and the case became a political attack against the Army. The Senate investigating committee returned to Germany and after five months of investigation adjourned the hearing on September 28.

On October 25, 1955 Dietrich was released from the US prison at Landsberg against the wishes of Brigadier General McAuliffe, by then having been promoted to US Army Commander in Germany. General McAuliffe had previously rejected three petitions from Dietrich for release.

A year later on December 22, 1956 against protests from the American Legion, Peiper was set free.

Top left: The field at Chegnogne pointed out to the editor by Monsieur Burnotte where the German soldiers were shot. Top right: Private Belfer photographed this scene on May 7, 1945. A Wehrmacht soldier captured by the US 3rd Army points out a 1st SS Panzer trooper responsible for the massacre (IWM). Below: The first simple memorial erected in the car park.

Below: Lieutenant Lary points out George Fleps, the man who fired the first shot (No. 14), after the opening of the trial at Dachau, Germany (Associated Press).

Above: Colonel David E. Pergrin (who now lives at Wallingford, Connecticut), commander of the US 291st Engineer Combat Battalion (Pergrin collection). Above right: This knocked-out M4 Sherman is being recovered from the N23/32 south of Malmedy by Americans after the battle. It was up this road that the south wing of Peiper's group passed before entering Ligneuville (IWM). Right: Little changed, the same spot today.

The attack on Stavelot

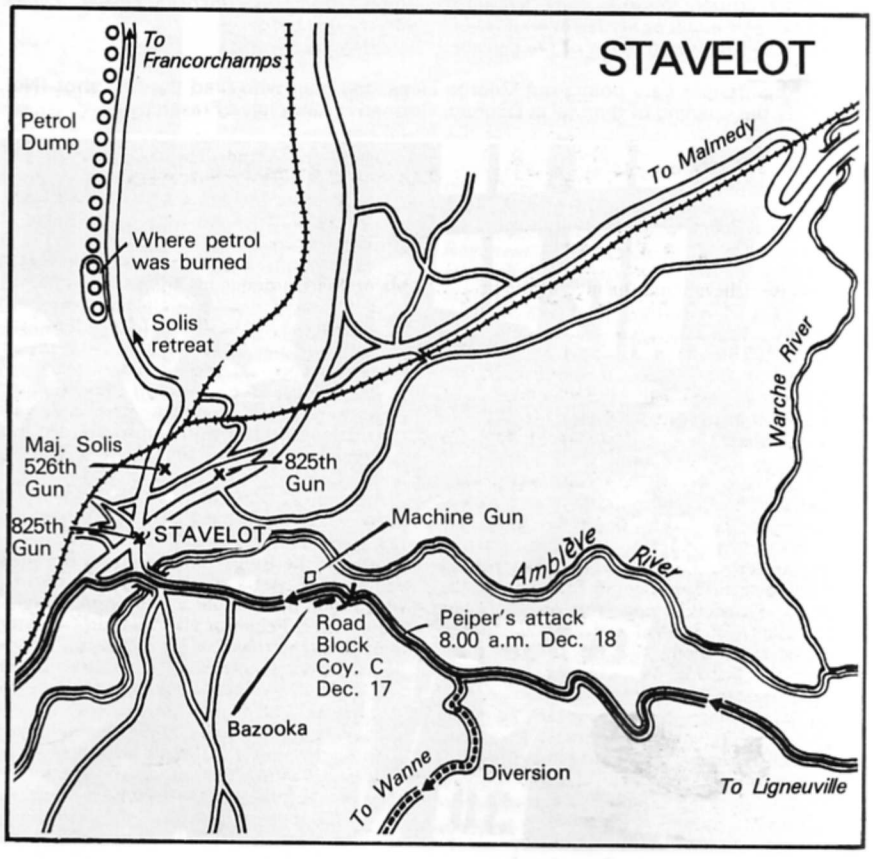
By 4.30 p.m. Peiper arrived at Ligneuville to find that this encirclement plan had failed—the Americans had escaped. Moreover his group was in a terrible mess spread out for miles over the two roads with long gaps between units. At 5.00 p.m. the first tank left for Stavelot using a small road via Beaumont.

Ahead of them Colonel Pergrin's engineers of Company C were ordered to set up road-blocks at Stavelot and Trois Ponts. If Peiper was to reach the Meuse he must cross the Ambleve river and this could only be done by heavy tanks (he had one battalion of 42 King Tigers in his Kampfgruppe) at certain bridges. One of these was Stavelot, a small stone bridge at the bottom of the valley. The 291st squad under Sergeant Hensel reached Stavelot to find the bridge unguarded (see map).

A road block was set up by a cliff which had a steep drop the other side—a perfect position. Hensel only had mines, one .30 machine gun and one bazooka. Thirteen mines were strung across the road just round the bend so that any vehicle approaching would not see them until it was too late. The bazooka was positioned 30 yards behind the mines.

By 7.30 p.m. Peiper's tanks had started down the hill towards the little roadblock. As the tanks approached the bend in pitch darkness, grinding slowly, the GI on lookout bravely shouted halt. The German infantrymen riding on the tanks opened fire which was answered with a rocket from the bazooka.

In the darkness it was impossible to see anything and the GIs then heard the noise of the tanks receding up the hill. One tank remained. Hensel's group then coasted quietly down the hill to report, leaving the mines in place. When they reached the bridge they were surprised to find 40 or 50 men, all of them strangers. Some thought they were infantrymen, others engineers. For by now the



bridge was wired ready to blow.

In spite of the puny force in front of them, Peiper delayed his advance down the hill till morning. Thirteen men of the 3rd squad, 2nd Platoon Company C of 291st Engineers with a bazooka and some rifles caused a delay which was to lose Peiper precious hours and gave time for preparations to be made at Trois Ponts to blow the critical bridge there.

It is also believed that the men at the bridge when Hensel returned were men from Skorzeny's disguised commando brigade. The attempt to blow the bridge failed as the demolition had been sabotaged. After the war a German prisoner admitted that he was at Stavelot on the night of December 17, and that they fixed the bridge so that it wouldn't blow.

During the night the 526th Armoured Infantry with some tank destroyers arrived in Stavelot commanded by Major Paul Solis. He set about positioning the tank destroyers at important cross roads, one being just behind the unblown bridge. Behind Stavelot, on the road to Francorchamps, was an enormous petrol dump of five-gallon jerrycans stacked for five miles along the side of the road. Although unmarked on Peiper's map, he was by now desperate for petrol.

At dawn Peiper opened his attack down the hill. After a preliminary barrage, at around 8.00 a.m. as soon as there was enough light to see, his tanks started down the hill. Half an hour later, what seemed to Major Solis to be an invincible column approached the bridge. The lead tank manoeuvred a little, then rumbled on to the bridge. The driver's heart must have been in his mouth, expecting it to blow up any second. But nothing happened and more tanks followed. As the tanks deployed on to the street behind the bridge, they came under fire from an anti-aircraft artillery battery.

As the tanks began to cross the bridge Major Solis ordered his troops to withdraw. Most went out on the Malmedy road, only Major Solis with two rifle squads and an anti-tank gun at the railway crossing, retiring up the minor road to Francorchamps.

Major Solis, under the impression that the tanks were following him up the road, gave instructions for the petrol dump (guarded by a detachment from the Belgian Army) to be burnt. Cans were put in a deep roadside ditch and set alight and more thrown on top to create a fiery road block. This story has been repeated many times and even used in the 'Battle of the Bulge' film to give a dramatic ending to Peiper's advance. But the burning which took place about a mile from Stavelot, didn't affect Peiper at all who didn't even try and climb the road but instead turned left to Trois Ponts. Lieutenant Colonel Frankland, commanding officer of the 117th Infantry Regiment, 30th Infantry Division, approaching Stavelot by this back road later that morning to reinforce the defence of Stavelot, ordered the burning to stop. The 117th were now on the job and they would protect the petrol dump.

Top: The expanded and split jerrycans from the dump, burnt on the Francorchamps road from Stavelot (IWM). Left: GIs begin clearing the wreckage off the road. By careful comparison it can be seen that they are working on the cans in the middle-distance of the top photograph (IWM). Above: The same road today. Below: The new Stavelot bridge built in 1955. The old bridge was successfully blown by the Americans later in the battle.

Top: Private Shub of the US Army Signal Corps had the unpleasant task of photographing the burial of civilians in a common grave in front of the abbey, victims of a Peiper Kampfgruppe atrocity in Stavelot (IWM). Above: Later the civilians were reburied in family plots in the town cemetary. A flag flies as a memorial to those who died near the site of the original grave.

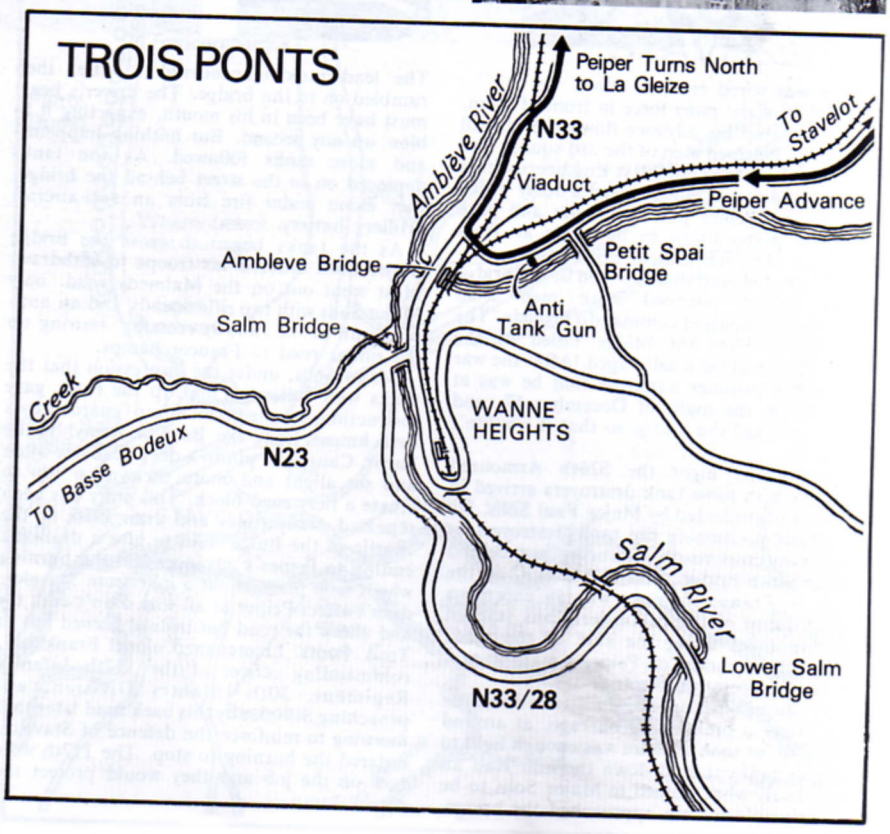
Above: Stavelot church still standing in the ruins of the town, severely damaged during the subsequent American advance (IWM). Below: Because of new building an exact comparison is impossible in 1974.

The battle of Trois Ponts

As Peiper attacked Stavelot to cross the Ambleve river, he still needed to cross more bridges at Trois Ponts. He therefore again split his force, sending one group along the south bank of the Ambleve via Wanne to seize these bridges. But his night's delay had enabled hurried preparations to be made to blow the bridges that morning by 51st Engineers (see map). In the event the narrow winding road through Wanne was almost impassable for tanks and Peiper's two companies of Mark IVs did not reach Trois Ponts until after Peiper had reached there using the main road.

The previous night the half-track towing a 57mm anti-tank gun had slipped a tread at Trois Ponts and had to fall out of the column of 526th Armoured Infantry proceeding to Stavelot. This gun had been set up to guard the approach road to the huge railway viaduct on the Stavelot road. This viaduct and another on the road to La Gleize would take a lot of TNT to blow so the engineers were preparing the three bridges over the rivers first—two in the town itself (over the Ambleve and Salm) and another south of Trois Ponts over the River Salm.

About 10.45 a.m. Peiper's column was sighted approaching the first railway viaduct



protected by the anti-tank gun. The leading Panther was hit, blocking the road temporarily. The next Panther opened fire on the gun and all four members of the crew were killed.

At 11.15 am. the Ambleve river bridge was blown—Peiper heard it and saw debris flying in all directions. It annoyed him, for as he correctly judged Trois Ponts was lightly held and a handful of men had blocked the way. After the war he said that if he had captured this bridge and had enough fuel he could have reached the Meuse the same day.

He had no alternative but to take the road north to La Gleize. He ordered, by radio, the column which had taken the Wanne road to return to Stavelot and take the main road. They could not have reached Trois Ponts by the Wanne road in any case as the Salm River Bridge was blown at 1.00 p.m. On this bridge the sergeant in charge had waited until German infantry were actually on the bridge before blowing it.

Now that Peiper had turned north to La Gleize further action had to be taken to block the advance. A 291st engineer detail was sent to Habiemont bridge to prepare it for demolition.

Meanwhile a report had been received from the 9th Tactical Air Command of the German column approaching La Gleize, a column almost fifteen miles long with the tail just south of Malmedy. Air attacks were carried out by Thunderbolts, Mustangs and Typhoons. They caused a considerable amount of damage.

Peiper crossed the Ambleve again at Cheneux, finding the bridge intact. No orders had been issued to the engineers to destroy it, consequently a loophole was left in the American defences. Peiper had just crossed the bridge when his column was attacked by the aircraft and he had to disperse it into the woods between the bridge and Cheneux.

He was not able to get going until about 4.00 p.m. when the fog came down and hid them from the air. Damaged vehicles had to be pushed off the road. Now only one bridge remained between him and his goal—the Habiemont bridge over the Lienne River.

Peiper reached the N23 just south of Froidville, turning right. The time was 4.30 p.m. At the Habiemont bridge the engineers' detail under Lieutenant Edelstein had just finished wiring the bridge. The detonator had been put in an old German sentry box about 30 yards behind the bridge.

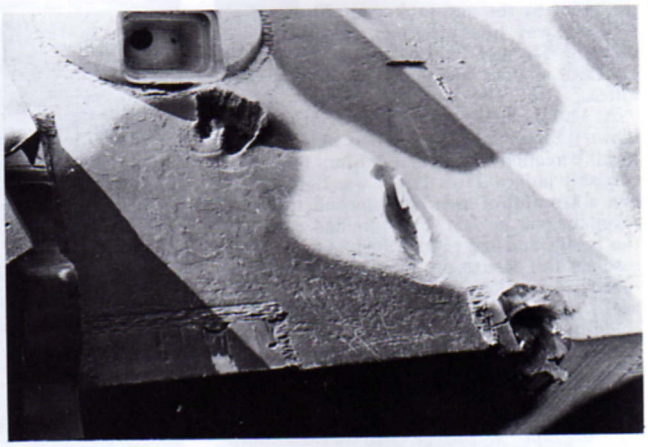
Just as daylight was fading, Corporal Chapin in the sentry box saw the German armoured column approaching. One of the King Tigers opened fire—Lieutenant Edelstein shouted 'Blow! Blow!' and Chapin turned the key.

Only a few vehicles behind the leaders, Peiper saw the bridge go. Peiper, helpless, could only sit and face the fact that time had run out. Although he would battle for five more days to escape it was at the bridge that it all ended—finished by a few men at Stavelot and Habiemont of the 291st Combat Engineers!

Above: The anti-tank gun manned by 526th Armoured Infantry was just off the road to the right. Peiper's tanks approached round the corner and the leading tank was knocked out. Below: The entrance to the railway viaduct through which Peiper then proceeded on his way to the river bridge.

Below: The Ambleve river bridge in Trois Ponts, blown as Peiper approached, as it is today.

Below: A good comparison taken after the battle of one of Peiper's King Tigers which ran out of petrol after turning right to La Gleize. Note the writing on the right-hand picture claiming it for the 1st US Army! (IWM).



Top left: One of Peiper's King Tigers preserved at La Gleize overlooking the Ambleve valley. Top right: Damage to the front of the same tank — all the shots have bounced off the heavy armour.

Left: The view today of the road (with woods to the right) where Peiper was attacked by aircraft after crossing the Cheneux bridge in the background. Above: The rebuilt Habiemont bridge with the site of the old bridge on the right.

Skorzeny's commandos

Colonel Otto Skorzeny's 150th Panzer Brigade was inextricably enmeshed with the 1st Panzer SS Division before the un-bridged Losheim railway cutting. Peiper had ruthlessly moved on but Skorzeny had to walk six miles to try and get forward to find out the reason for the indescribable jam. Near Losheim in a copse he found his Headquarters Company—the one perfectly Americanised company of his brigade.

As the whole idea of Operation Grief, as it was code-named, was to lead and so surprise the Americans, he saw the whole purpose of his mission fading.

He therefore decided to send out the jeep teams and seven vehicles left on December 16 to create chaos and confusion behind enemy lines. In this, for their numbers, they were incredibly successful.

One team changed the road signs at the Mont Rigi crossroads on the morning of the 17th and sent the 16th Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division via Malmedy to Waimes.

Another, led by a former commandant of a German Merchant Marine frigate, entered Malmedy and cruised around, claimed to have had a drink with a US soldier in a cafe and then reported back that Malmedy was only occupied by service units and that they were leaving town (just before Colonel Pergrin arrived to set up his road blocks). This information was to lead Skorzeny to prepare an attack in force against Malmedy described later.

Another team when stopped by an American column for information, feigned fear so convincingly that the Americans turned back and yet another cut the telephone

Above: Lieutenant-Colonel Otto Skorzeny pictured at his trial in August 1947 accused of waging war in American uniforms. He was acquitted largely on the testimony of Wing Commander Yeo-Thomas who admitted that he had also fought in German uniform when necessary (Associated Press).

wires between the headquarters of Hodges and Bradley.

One party actually reached the Meuse. Another was captured by Colonel Pergrin's road-block on the N32 between Malmedy and the Baugnez crossroads.

At 4.45 p.m. on December 18, the men from Company B at the road block saw an American jeep approaching. It was getting dark and difficult to see clearly, but they could see it contained four soldiers with two more sitting on the bonnet, all in American uniform. By now the news of Germans in GI dress had spread to all units and any strange vehicle was held on suspicion. (Two genuine American soldiers were killed on the 20th by a patrol made jittery by the scare.)

All the men on the road-block tried to read the numbers on the front bumper as it approached. When they saw 106 (which identified it as 106th Infantry Division) they realised it was phoney as the unit was nowhere near them. At the same time one of the men on the bonnet jumped off and shouted a warning that the men in the jeep were Germans. The Germans in the jeep fired at him as he ran to the road-block; meanwhile the other soldier on the bonnet jumped off and escaped. The machine gun opened fire from the road-block as the jeep tried to turn round. One man was killed running for the woods, the others were captured. The men sitting on the bonnet were genuine Americans who had been captured.

However, the most successful team was one that was captured near Aywaille at a road-block on December 17. The three men in the team, Gunther Billing, 21, Wilhelm Schmidt, 18, and Manfred Pernass, aged 23, after failing to give the correct password admitted they were members of a special force, that there were many Germans dressed as American soldiers behind American lines. The credit must go to one of the three for starting the greatest scare of the whole offensive—that the most important mission of

Below: The crossroads at Mont Rigi, where the commandos changed the road sign and sent the 16th Regiment of the 1st US Infantry Division the longest way to Waimes.

Operation Grief was the capture of Eisenhower by Skorzeny. Following this news, Eisenhower was practically made prisoner in his own headquarters by his zealous security forces for nearly a week, hampering his movements.

Thereafter suspicion fell on everyone from General Bradley down to any soldier driver. Passwords were not trusted, and unless the person stopped could give the name of President Roosevelt's dog, who Betty Grable's husband was, or where a particular baseball team was in the league, he was liable to be hauled off for questioning. Field-Marshal Montgomery had a frustrating time until he was issued with an American identity card.

The confusion and doubt sown by this one team affected the conduct of the American troops throughout Eastern Belgium.

The three had adopted the names of George Sensenbach for Schmidt; Clarence van der Wert for Pernass; and Charles W. Lawrence, for Billing, who was the Nazi leader of the group. They had in their possession $900 and £1,000 in notes, in addition to their German pay books, two Stens and two Colt .45s, a German automatic and six US hand grenades.

Being in American uniform, the three were considered spies. They were taken to the American barracks at Henri-Chapelle. The night before they were due to be shot,

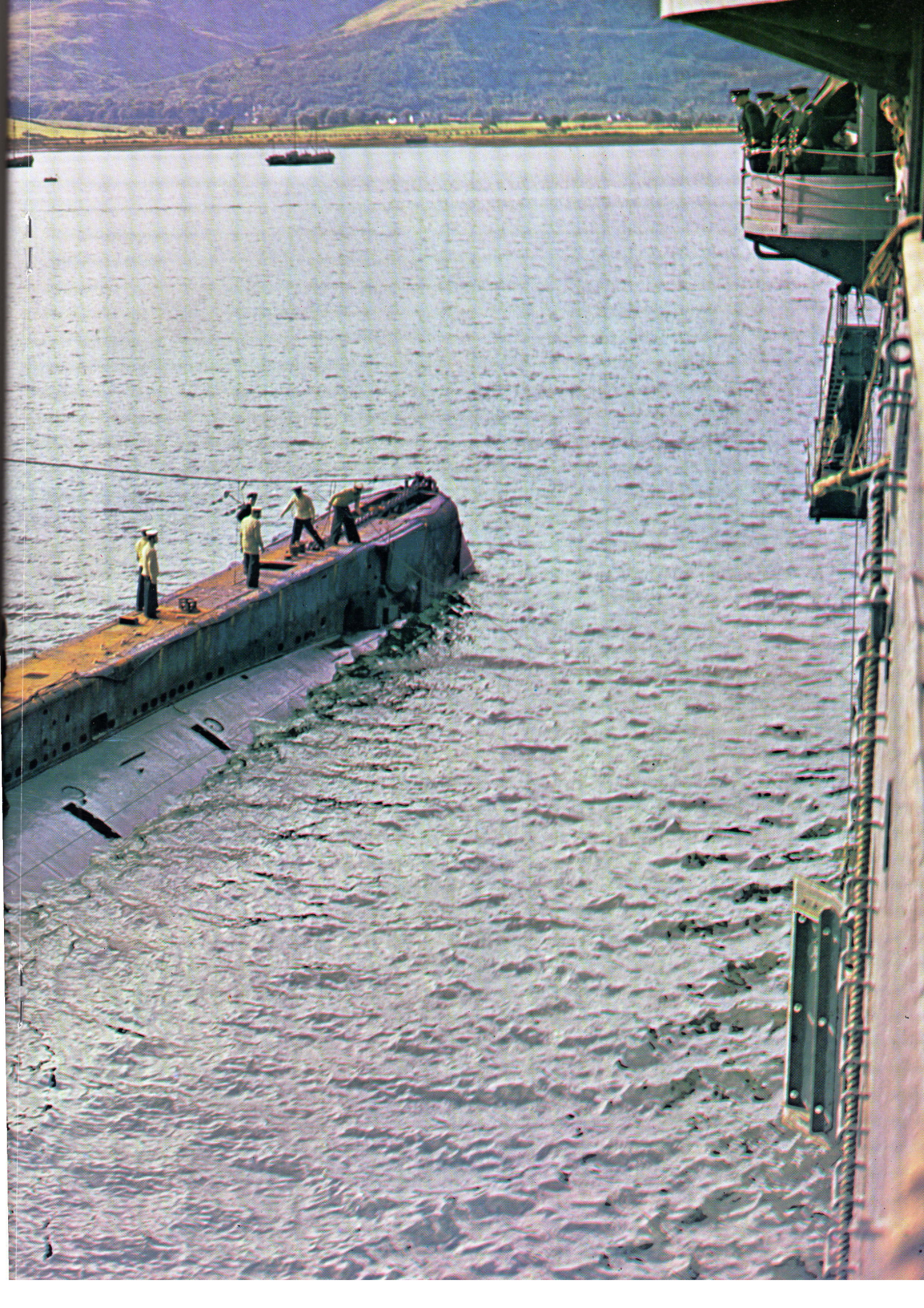
Above: Wilhelm Schmidt, accompanied by MPs, is marched to the firing squad (IWM). Above left: Wilhelm Schmidt on the left, Gunther Billing centre, and Manfred Pernass are tied to stakes. Left: Gunther Billing dressed in US Army fatigues is tied to the centre post (IWM).

Above: Captain Joseph Eiser, medical officer of the 633rd Medical Clearing Station pins a circle of white paper on Manfred Pernass as an aiming mark (IWM).

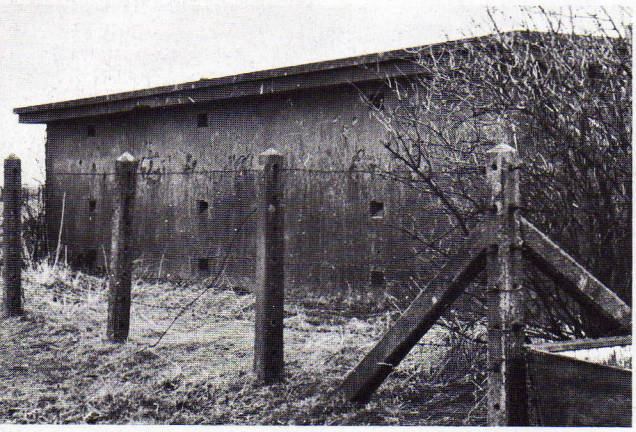
Wehrmacht nurses in the next cell sang carols to them. They were dressed in US fatigues, with light blue stripes, and on December 23 lined up before a firing squad in front of a munitions building at the rear of the barracks. White paper discs were pinned on their chests and blindfolds placed on their faces, as they were tied to three stakes. At twenty paces a twelve-man firing squad took aim—and fired. The time was 9.30 a.m. Gunther Billing, the Nazi, had died with a cry to his Fuhrer on his lips, having rejected the services of a minister, the others in silence after receiving his blessing.

The three men were then buried in a temporary cemetery at Henri-Chapelle. After the war their bodies were transferred to the German Military Cemetery at Lommel where they now lie, side by side with 39,000 other German dead, most probably forgotten but having played a truly significant part in the battle of the Ardennes.

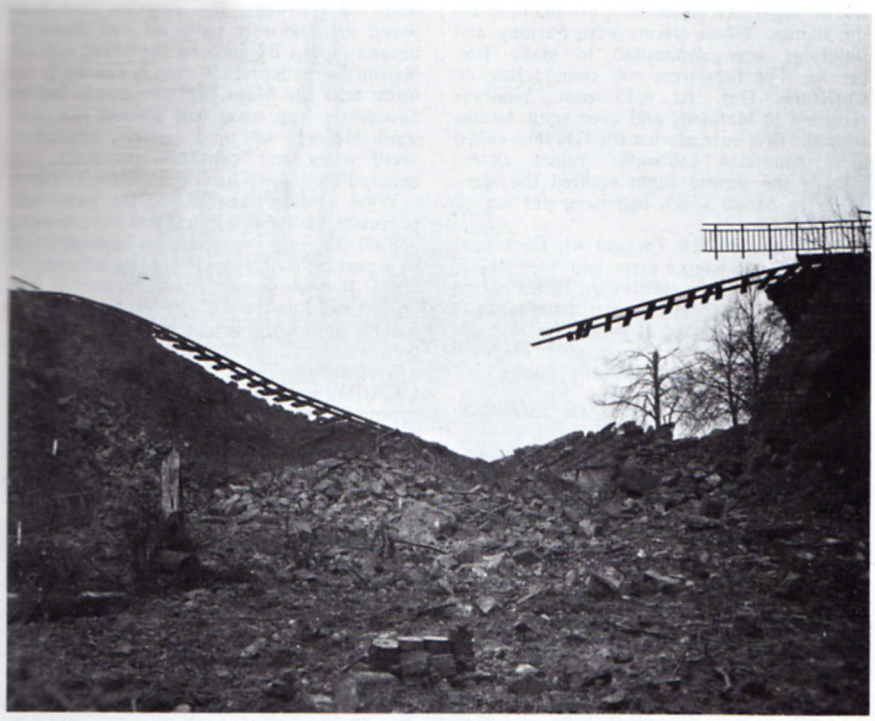
Fifteen other Skorzeny commandos were captured and shot, either at Henri-Chapelle or at Huy. Three teams returned.



Above: the firing squad aim—and fire (IWM). Below and bottom: The wall of the munitions building, photographed by the editor in January 1974. It was very difficult to find as the town location given on the photograph captions is incorrect. Today, it remain overgrown and derelict, a moving reminder most probabl forgotten.



Left: The three now lie side by side i the German cemetery at Lomme Belgium.



Above: The blown-up viaduct at Malmedy, photographed by Colonel Pergrin (Pergrin Collection). Above right: The rebuilt viaduct today.

Skorzeny attacks Malmedy

Malmedy, scene of the massacre on Sunday December 17, was to be the focus of a pre-dawn attack by Skorzeny on December 21.

Skorzeny had pressed Dietrich for his men to be used as normal troops, now that it was not possible for him to succeed in his original objective, the capture of the River Meuse bridges.

The previous afternoon, one of Skorzeny's men was captured in the outskirts of Malmedy and during interrogation, gave information that a strong attack by Skorzeny's 150th Panzer Brigade was to begin at 3.30 a.m. the following morning. It was to be part of a general assault by Dietrich in the North, Malmedy being the important road junction by-passed by Peiper. Peiper was now known to be in trouble—if Malmedy could be captured it would open the way north behind the Americans, as well as giving Peiper an escape route.

Based on the information brought back by the German merchant marine captain who entered Malmedy on December 17, Skorzeny thought he was attacking a lightly defended town. He didn't know that by then Colonel Pergrin of the 291st Engineers (whose road blocks were the only defence at that time), had now been reinforced, and the 120th Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division had taken over the defence of Malmedy. By this time the 291st had prepared all the bridges and railway viaducts for demolition and had laid minefields. They continued to man two of the original road blocks—at the Warche river bridge and the large railway viaduct, and had set up machine guns along the railway embankment.

Skorzeny's plan was to send one group along the N32 and another group to attack up the N23. As he had no heavy artillery he was hoping for a surprise attack and thought he could virtually drive into the town within the hour.

At 3.30 a.m. the attack started, but in an unusual way.

At the Warche river bridge, a tank destroyer battalion had their command post in a house opposite the paper mill. Suddenly the whole area was illuminated by hundreds of flares, in the light of which three 291st men in charge of the Warche bridge nearby, saw Skorzeny's tanks and men approaching. What had happened was that instead of coming up the road over the bridge, the Germans were cutting across the field to the left of the road and had set off American trip-wire flares whilst getting in position to attack. As the tanks began to open fire, the three men ran to the tank destroyer command post. Within minutes the TD unit had opened fire from behind the house. There were 33 men in the two-storey building, now positioned at all the windows. One 291st man was observing fire for the TDs. The Germans reached the house and threw some hand grenades into the basement where the first-aid station had been set up, before being driven back. A Panther disguised as a Sherman reached the house and stopped beside it. It then moved down the road, over the bridge and took up a position where it could easily fire at the house. It opened fire, one of the first shells hitting the

Above: The railway embankment at Malmedy today which Skorzeny's men attacked with great loss.

Above: Looking from the house, which was occupied by the Americans, to the Warche river bridge. Note the damage to the paper mill.

kitchen, killing three men. The battle intensified, with the house being sprayed with machine gun fire. More GIs were killed, those remaining continuing to fire from the windows. The gunners on the TD 3-inch guns outside were all killed. At daybreak fog had settled over the area, but about 10.00 a.m. it lifted, making visible the action at the house to the men on the railway embankment. The house then started receiving fire from the embankment and US artillery from the hills shelled the area, as it was then thought the house was in German hands and being used as a command post. The Panther at the bridge was hit and five men came out of the turret and ran up the road, looking for shelter. All were cut down by the defenders in the house.

More tanks approached and German infantry stormed the railway embankment. It was in this battle that the new proximity-fused shells were used by the Americans for the first time, which caused some Germans, who were used to shells exploding when they hit and not in the air, to panic. Over 100 Germans died attempting to storm the embankment.

The battle raged all morning around the paper-mill, embankment and house, in which by early afternoon only twelve men remained alive. The survivors decided that two men should try to get help and one of the 291st men and a corporal elected to try. Of the other two 291st men, one had been killed and one wounded.

They ran through the paper-mill yard down to the river, across it and to the railway line. When they reached the other side of the river they were mistaken for Germans in American uniform and were lucky not to be shot. A captain questioned them and finally believed their story, that they were Americans and that the house was in American hands and had been all day.

With the overpowering weight of the American artillery, which fired 3000 shells at Skorzeny's men in the fields, the battle slowly subsided.

Skorzeny had watched the battle from the top of the hill since daylight and was dismayed to see his tanks trapped around the bridge and picked off one by one. It was obvious to him that Malmedy was not lightly defended. By mid-afternoon Skorzeny ordered his men to fall back to the crest of the hills where they remained for the next week.

The following day the officers of the 120th Regiment feared the attack would be renewed and ordered Colonel Pergrin to blow up the Warche bridge. Also they wanted the railway viaduct blown—an immense stone-arched construction which apart from being difficult to destroy would be difficult to rebuild when the battle was over. Colonel Pergrin resisted but faced with a direct order prepared the bridge for demolition with 1,800 lbs of TNT.

At 2.00 p.m. on December 22, it was blown, the rubble completely blocking the road, almost as high as the embankment. Another viaduct was blown over the Route de Falaize.

On December 23 no enemy were seen, but just after 2.00 p.m. the first US planes appeared over Malmedy. German anti-aircraft guns opened up without effect and the sight of the planes cheered the GIs dug in on the ground. Then at 4.00 p.m. a flight of six American bombers appeared with a fighter escort. To the horror of the troops they began to bomb Malmedy, killing many civilians and men in the heart of the town. Frantic messages were sent to various headquarters including First Army HQ stating that Malmedy was not in enemy hands. They were told a terrible unexplainable mistake had occurred which would not happen again.

However, on the next day, Christmas Eve, a further flight of eighteen B-24 Liberators flew over at 2.30 p.m. whilst the rubble was still being searched for survivors from the previous day's bombing. This time the bombers did a good job and the whole central part of the town was obliterated. The town caught fire and all night men of the 291st worked to douse the flames. Whole streets were burning and buildings were dynamited to make firebreaks. The fires were still smouldering on Christmas Day. At 4.30 p.m. bombers returned to Malmedy and once again bombs from the first wave of what the GIs then called 'The American Luftwaffe' rained down. Luckily the second flight spotted the identification panels which had been put out all over the town.

For weeks the 9th Tactical Air Command refused to concede an error had been made. Perhaps the anti-aircraft fire on December 23 had been interpreted to mean that Malmedy was in German hands. However the air force was finally persuaded that the town was held by Americans and the bombing stopped.

BARON VON DER HEYDTE SURRENDERS

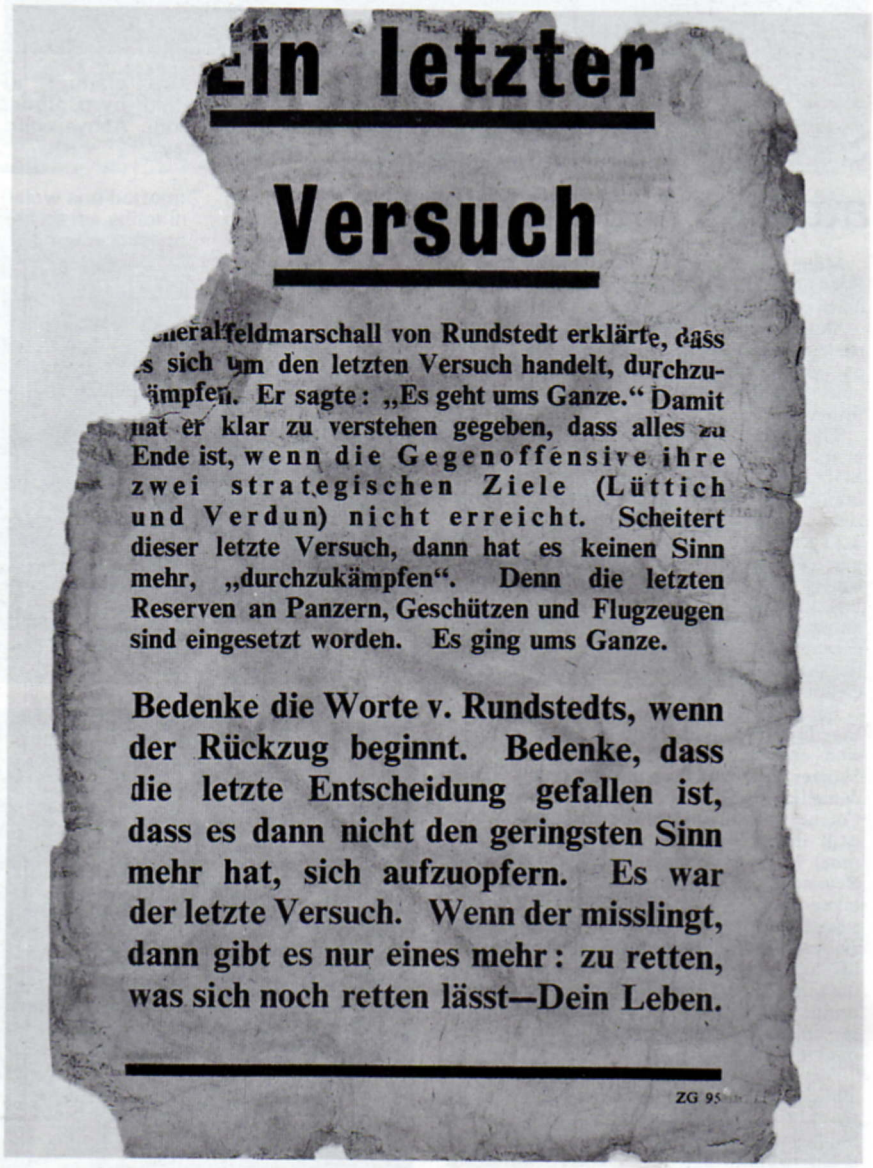
By the time Skorzeny had ordered his men to retire from the December 21 attack, Baron von der Heydte's paratroopers, who had been widely scattered in their drop during the night of December 17, were without food and ammunition. Only one aircraft had dropped supplies and no messages had been received.

Only 125 men made the initial rendezvous north of Malmedy, few supplies had been found and the only radio set was damaged beyond repair. By noon on the 18th, von der Heydte had gathered 150 men in a camp in the forest near the Mont Rigi crossroads (where Skorzeny's jeep team had altered the road sign). He sent out small patrols, ambushed small units and captured prisoners. He believed his mission had been a dismal failure.

What he didn't realise was the panic and confusion Skorzeny's jeep teams were causing behind the lines was added to immeasurably by reports of paratroopers landing all over the place. It made it seem as if thousands had landed and hundreds of American units were sent to find them and, because the whole German 3rd Parachute Division was being used in a ground role (like the 82nd and 101st US Airborne Divisions), when prisoners were captured, it was assumed these had parachuted in as well.

After clashing with a strong American patrol near Monschau, von der Heydte split his men into groups of three and sent them to make their own way back to the German lines.

He himself, in a bad way with his broken arm, frozen feet and no food for days, surrendered to the 395th Infantry of the US 99th Infantry Division in Monschau.



Ein letzter

Versuch

Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt erklärte, dass es sich um den letzten Versuch handelt, durchzukämpfen. Er sagte: „Es geht ums Ganze." Damit hat er klar zu verstehen gegeben, dass alles zu Ende ist, wenn die Gegenoffensive ihre zwei strategischen Ziele (Lüttich und Verdun) nicht erreicht. Scheitert dieser letzte Versuch, dann hat es keinen Sinn mehr, „durchzukämpfen". Denn die letzten Reserven an Panzern, Geschützen und Flugzeugen sind eingesetzt worden. Es ging ums Ganze.

Bedenke die Worte v. Rundstedts, wenn der Rückzug beginnt. Bedenke, dass die letzte Entscheidung gefallen ist, dass es dann nicht den geringsten Sinn mehr hat, sich aufzuopfern. Es war der letzte Versuch. Wenn der misslingt, dann gibt es nur eines mehr: zu retten, was sich noch retten lässt—Dein Leben.

ZG 95

A copy of a leaflet given to the editor by M. Joss Heintz produced by the Americans and dropped behind German lines. It is headed 'A last try' and suggests that this last attack is not worth the sacrifice. The Americans incorrectly state that the German objectives are Liege and Verdun.

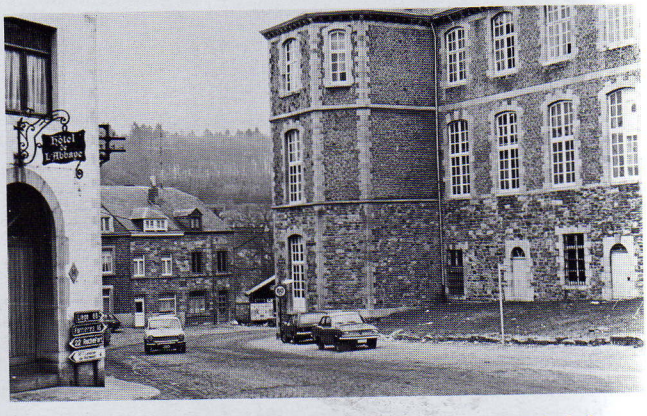
The tide turns

The tide has turned and the Americans are advancing. The German attack gradually came to a standstill for lack of supplies, petrol, ammunition and reserves. The overwhelming superiority of the Allied air force, together with heavy artillery regained the initiative and the German 'Bulge' was pushed back. Above and below: 83rd US Infantry Division in Bihain (IWM) and our comparison today.

Left and above: Men of the 101st Airborne Division move out (IWM). The bullet-holed road sign was taken back to the 'Screaming Eagle's' museum at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, after the battle.

Left and above: Further down the road they pass the road to Marvie (IWM).

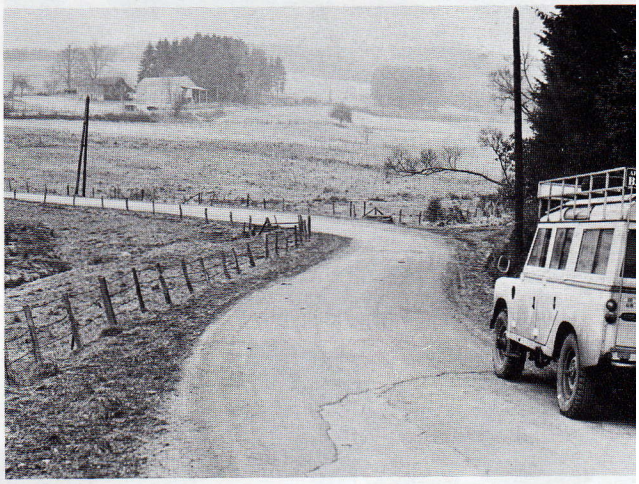
Left and above: Paratroopers of 1st Canadian Battalion on the move through Marche on January 9, 1945 (IWM)



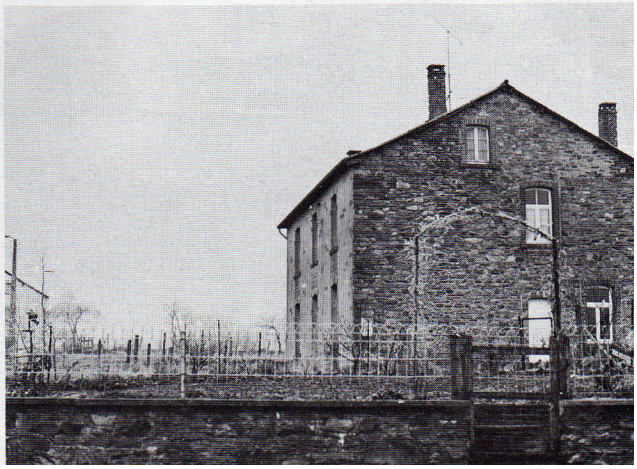
Left and above: Company I, 347th Regiment of 87th Infantry Division leave St. Hubert during the advance to La Roche (IWM). All comparison photographs were taken in January 1974.

Above and right: M36 tank destroyers of the US 2nd Armoured Division advance along the road from Dochamps to Samree (IWM). Our front cover picture was taken further down this road.

Right and above: On the northern flank of the German salient, US 3rd Armoured Division advances through Lierneux (IWM).



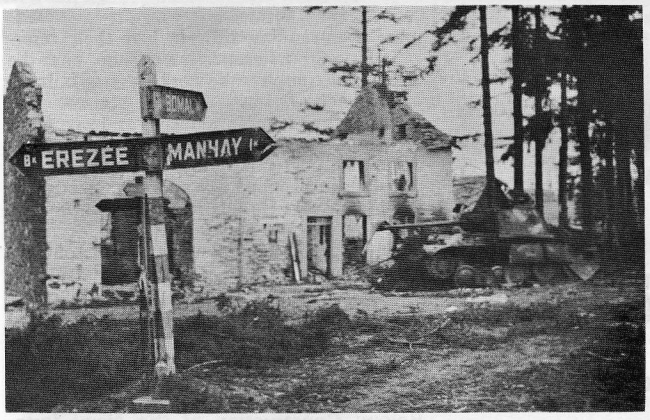
Right and above: Destroyed equipment pushed off the road in the American advance through Villers-La Bonne-Eau (IWM).

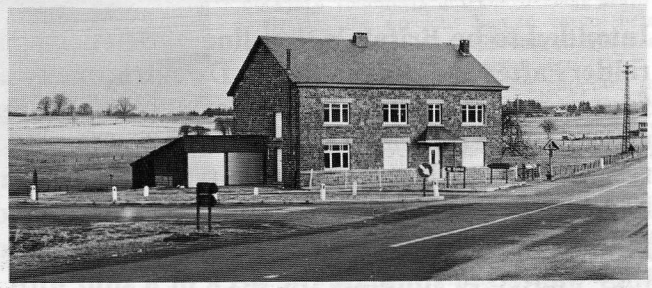


Right and above: GIs advance through Lomre (IWM). The original photo-caption said the photographer was wounded during this barrage—no such fate befell the editor on the same

Left and above: There was considerable tank fighting in the Grandmenil and Manhay area half-a-mile down the road, both villages being badly damaged. This Panther V was knocked out in Manhay (IWM).

Left and above: Another Panther V came to grief on the N15 at Manhay by the crossroads to Grandmenil (IWM).





Left and above: At Grandmenil itself this Panther V was knocked out and the house destroyed. Note how the signpost is twisted—Manhay is really directly ahead (IWM). Below: One of the Panther Vs at Grandmenil today—the muzzle brake is missing and somebody has sprayed it with pink paint—the Pink Panther!

officers' quarters, and the commanding officer's cabin. Above this towered the control room, air-conditioners, lantern house and radar aerials.

Armament consisted of two 3.7 AA guns of Army origin and two Bofors guns, and a number of Lewis gun mountings were built into the top deck.

Hanging in sponsons from deck level at the stern end of the tower was a half-ton derrick to bring supplies and men on board. On the other end Trinity House mounted a hand-driven fog signal.

Two lifeboats and several Carley floats hung from the main deck in case of emergencies.

Inside the "legs" or cylinders of the tower were seven decks. These contained the crew's quarters, with big diesel generators housed on the top deck. Deep down almost on the sea-bottom, were the magazines and supply rooms.

Realising that the men on board the forts would be completely immobile and isolated from land for long periods, the Admiralty made every effort to make the lonely duty as pleasant as possible. The quarters were painted in light colours and the furniture and bedding were the best that could be provided from an austerity-ridden Britain.

Cheerfulness among the crew was essential since the war had to come within the range of their guns and there was no opportunity of taking the fight to the enemy.

On Thames-side, near Gravesend, a simple dry-dock was built, and into it the contractors poured tons of concrete to form the pontoons. These were then floated out at high tide and towed to another berth, where the cylinders were built directly on to the top of them.

Other men ashore were making the decks for the cylinders—like large biscuits—one on top of the other. As the cylinders grew, the decks were hoisted inside and concreted in.

Finally the top deck, the control room and the lantern house were built on before the monster was towed to the fitting-out berth in the tideway, at Tilbury.

Then there was feverish activity. All the war-like equipment, the air conditioners, generators, pumps and furniture had to be installed. The forts were commissioned at the fitting-out basin so the crews were thoroughly familiar with their working long before they took to the sea.

At last, just before Christmas, 1941, the first fort was nearly ready.

Ammunition was hoisted on board, the 5,000-gallon water tank was filled, and last messages were written for the shore.

Three tugs came and stood by ready to tow the ugly 4,500-ton leviathan to its lonely site.

It was felt that the distance from Gravesend to the Roughs Sands was too far to be completed in one tide, so it was planned to use two ebbs and one flood for the tow. The flood would be stemmed during darkness.

The weather was bitterly cold during January, 1942, and bad conditions at sea prevented the start of the big tow for about ten days. Suddenly there was a calm in the early days of February—but the calm also brought dense fog which obscured the leading tug.

So narrow and dangerous is the twisting channel of the Thames near Southend that it became necessary to slow down and swing round to stem the tide.

Then a fresh wind sprang up which cleared the fog but knocked up a nasty sea.

There were some anxious moments during the night as the tugs struggled hard against the flood tide and blinding snow with their charge. But the dawn brought near calm and warming sunshine and by midday His Majesty's Fort Roughs was off Felixstowe ready for sinking!

No one had yet sunk a 4,000-ton fort in deep water, and though many tests had been made with scale models in test tanks the success of the operation depended on the fine calculations of the designer, Mr. G. A. Maunsell, and the faith of his colleagues, that there was no risk of the fort toppling sideways, ditching the officers and men as well as the dockyard volunteers into the freezing sea.

Besides the precious human cargo there were guns, ammunition and radar at risk at a time when these things were scarce.

The drill for the sinking was supposed to follow a set pattern. First the temporary wooden bulwarks had to be removed—they were fitted to prevent waves from swamping the pontoon prematurely—and then the sea-cock had to be opened.

The naval officer in charge became irritated by the delay and gave the order for sinking before all the wooden bulwarks were taken off. He was afraid of enemy action by aircraft and wanted to get the small fleet safely back to port.

After about 15 minutes of suspense the bow of the pontoon slipped under the water. An agonising two minutes later, after the fort had heaved sideways at a sharp angle, the stern began to settled with a great fluffing of escaping air. All around, the sea appeared to be boiling as the erupting air broke the surface.

A cheer broke out when the fort regained its equilibrium.

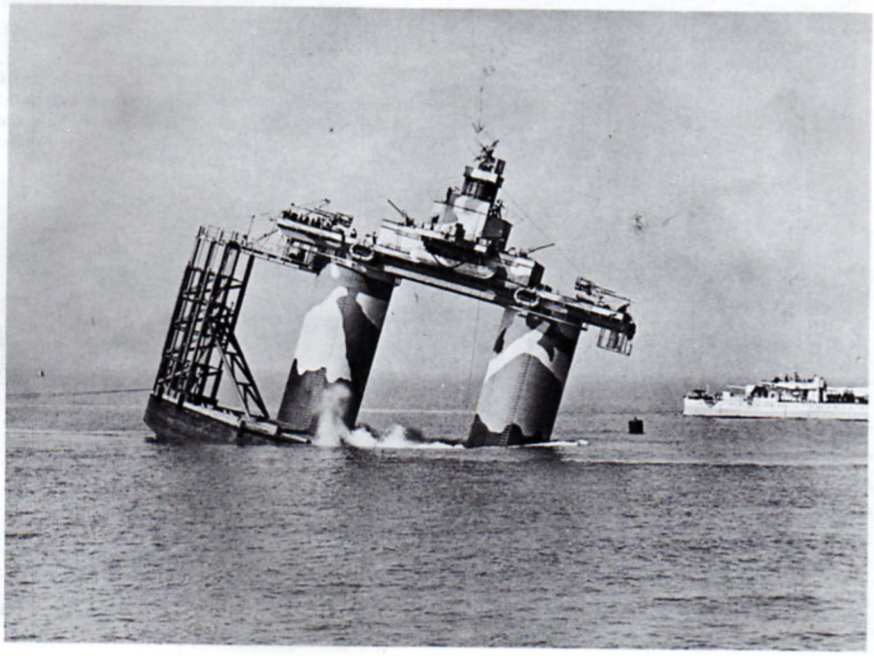
There were some doubts about the ability of the concrete pontoon to stand up to the tremendous load from the rest of the structure on the extended forefoot as it struck the bottom of the sea, and hung there for a few moments before it settled. To ensure that no damage was done to the submerging pontoon, it was suggested that a large concrete pipe be hung on wires just under the forefoot. It was argued that the pipe would crush under load and take the shock of sinking.

Subsequently forts were all sunk with the tube on the bows to cushion the blow, and the simple idea worked very well.

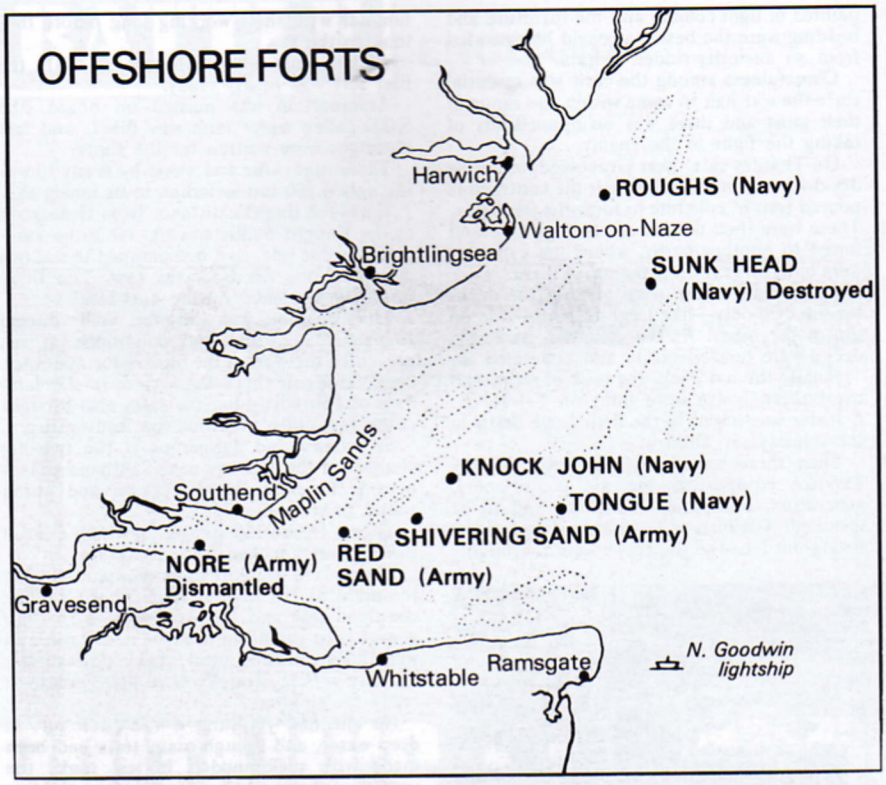
Mr. John Posford was the civil engineer in charge of the construction and placing of the forts. He worked on the staff of Mr. Maunsell, the designer and after the war both men went into partnership.

Mr. Posford now lives at Kirton and is still concerned with designing off-shore platforms.

He designed a special off-shore drilling rig for the National Coal Board which has been



Above: Another fort is begun—the reinforcing cage is laid for the pontoon construction (IWM). Below: The completed forts with their complement of men, stores and guns were towed out in one piece and sunk in position. A naval officer described the sinking as 'hair raising!' (IWM).



working off the Northumberland coast since 1957 long before the North Sea oil rush started.

Posford went down with each fort, and never had a moment of doubt.

Several floating structures had been built before, but no one had laid such a large stucture under hostile conditions on an unprepared part of the sea-bed.

Capt. J. Hughes-Hallet, R.N., who acted as a link between the designer's staff and the Admiralty, was not so certain of the ability of the forts to remain upright as they sank.

He said that the question of stability during the time the forts were sinking caused a considerable amount of anxiety and a clash of opinion during the design stage.

But he confessed afterwards that he had overlooked the simple fact that the bottom of the fort would hit the sea bed before it could possibly turn over—a fact that had escaped others more highly placed than himself.

Nevertheless, the sinking of the four forts was a very dramatic moment in the lives of all those who went down with them.

Wave action and scour of the sea-bed constituted a problem which was always at the back of the designer's mind when he proposed his radical ideas.

The bed of the Thames Estuary is composed of hard clay and much shifting shingle. If the forts settled on the shifting shingle there was always the danger that, stone by stone, the structures would become undermined. And with very little warning they would topple sideways into the water.

To satisfy themselves, the design staff got permission from the Admiralty to investigate the wrecks of shipping sunk by enemy action in the Thames mouth and on the dreaded Goodwin Sands.

It was found that when a ship went down end-on to the tideway, very little scouring occurred. But those ships which had laid athwart the tideway caused considerable scouring and eventually tilted over or broke up under the action of the waves and tide.

The fort pontoons were made lozenge-shaped and sufficiently strong to resist breaking up, and were sunk to lie with the tide to offer minimum resistance to the tide and the subsequent scouring action.

In the event, only one fort caused any serious concern, and this was relieved after a carpet of rubble and chalk had been dumped around it. Proof of the designer's convictions is shown by all four naval forts surviving over 30 years and all without maintenance since the war.

Trinity House were so impressed by the efficiency of the forts that it even considered taking over two of them—the Sunk Head and the Tongue Sand—when the war ended to replace light vessels which were normally moored nearby. Later it changed its mind.

A spokesman said that the trouble was that they had no idea how long the forts would last. And he thought that the commissioners felt they knew more about light vessels, and reversed their decision. All maintenance had to be done at sea, and if the towers had tilted even a slight amount the light would have been out of level.

One afterthought in the construction of the forts was the need for a dolphin to be fixed on the "stern" end to allow supply ships to come alongside. The wooden dolphins were fitted in just four weeks, but they took a heavy beating from the drifters and none has survived.

The most unusual feature of the forts was the practice of towing them to sea fully manned and armed so that they were ready for instant use immediately they had been sunk in position. The Tongue Sand fort actually engaged the enemy within a few minutes of sinking.

The total cost of the offshore naval forts was about £285,000 and they were built in the incredibly short time of 11 months between the date when the first pontoon was laid down and the last fort was sunk in position.

Cmdr. J. Poland, R.N., who was staff officer to the C-in-C The Nore, declared the forts a great success when the count was made immediately after the war.

Reliable figures, he said, were hard to come by, but from his recollection the four forts were credited with 22 enemy aircraft shot down, one E-boat destroyed and another badly damaged, and between 20 and 30 flying bombs (VIs) destroyed, especially during the second phase when the Germans were firing the bombs from the northern part of Holland.

There were also many rescue operations for friendly airmen who ditched nearby.

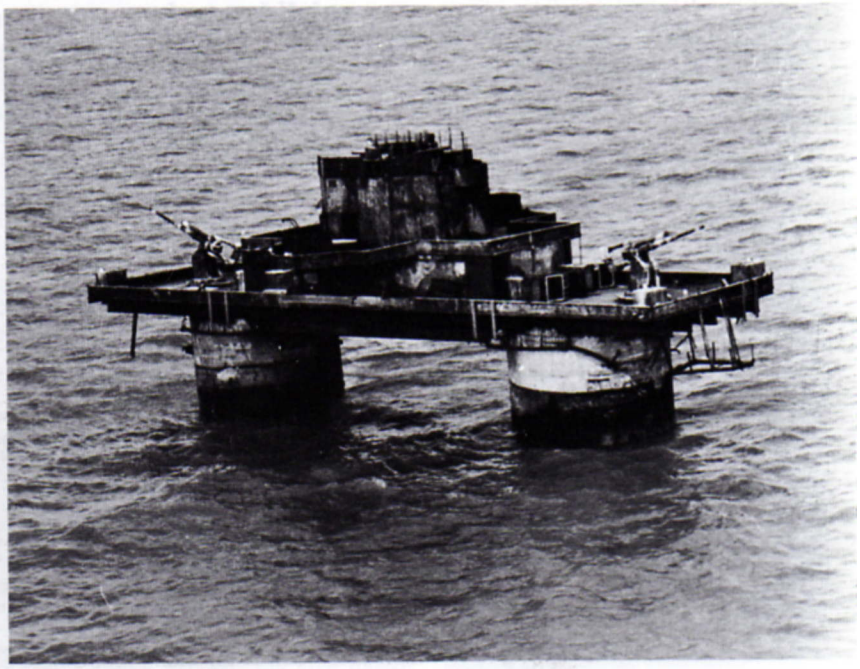
The Tongue Sand fort was even a target for the torpedoes from a flotilla of E-boats which had been out harassing shipping in the estuary.

The flotilla was watched closely on radar and when it was at 8,000 yards range every gun was brought to bear. The flotilla broke up in confusion after one boat was sunk and another badly damaged. Prisoners later confirmed that the fort was on the list of targets.

The Roughs and Sunk Head forts might also have covered themselves in E-boat glory but for the bungling of a command.

Both forts had a flotilla of E-boats on their radar screens, and were well placed to open fire. But the controller ashore, who was not very well placed to decide the issue, withheld the command to open fire. Meanwhile the whole flotilla steamed quietly by and out of range!

Below: The Navy fort at Tongue Sand photographed by the editor. The guns are still in position but the towers have a pronounced list.



The Army Forts

Mr. Maunsell was also responsible for the design of the Army forts, three of which were placed in the Thames estuary and three in Liverpool Bay.

The Army forts had a base of four hollow reinforced concrete members shaped like an Oxford picture-frame (a square with the sides extended beyond the corners), with the sides 40 feet long and the projections 22½ feet long.

On the base went the four hollow concrete legs, three feet in diameter outside and a foot thick. They were prefabricated in sections about 17 feet long and weighing five tons; at the top they were bound together by a 14-foot square reinforced concrete cap.

On the cap rested the octagonal superstructure, like a cube with the vertical corners clipped off, 36 feet from wall to wall. Each tower had three decks. The top deck was reserved for the guns, searchlight and instruments. Each tower weighed about 750 tons.

The Liverpool towers were 117 feet high; the Thames Estuary towers, sunk in shallower water, were slightly smaller. They were taken out, ready manned, with their bases attached to the lighters. In each case the Bofors tower went first, as it was best able to defend itself if attacked.

After they had been grounded careful watch was kept on these for "scouring". One tower tilted nearly five degrees, which could be corrected on the guns but which called for ingenious improvisation when the crew wanted to use its quarter-size billiards table. Chalk-rubble dumped in the scour-holes checked the tilting and even reduced it.

The first fort appeared in the Thames estuary in 1943. The first tower to be sunk in position had two Bofors guns on the flat roof ready to protect the sinking of the six other towers in the group.

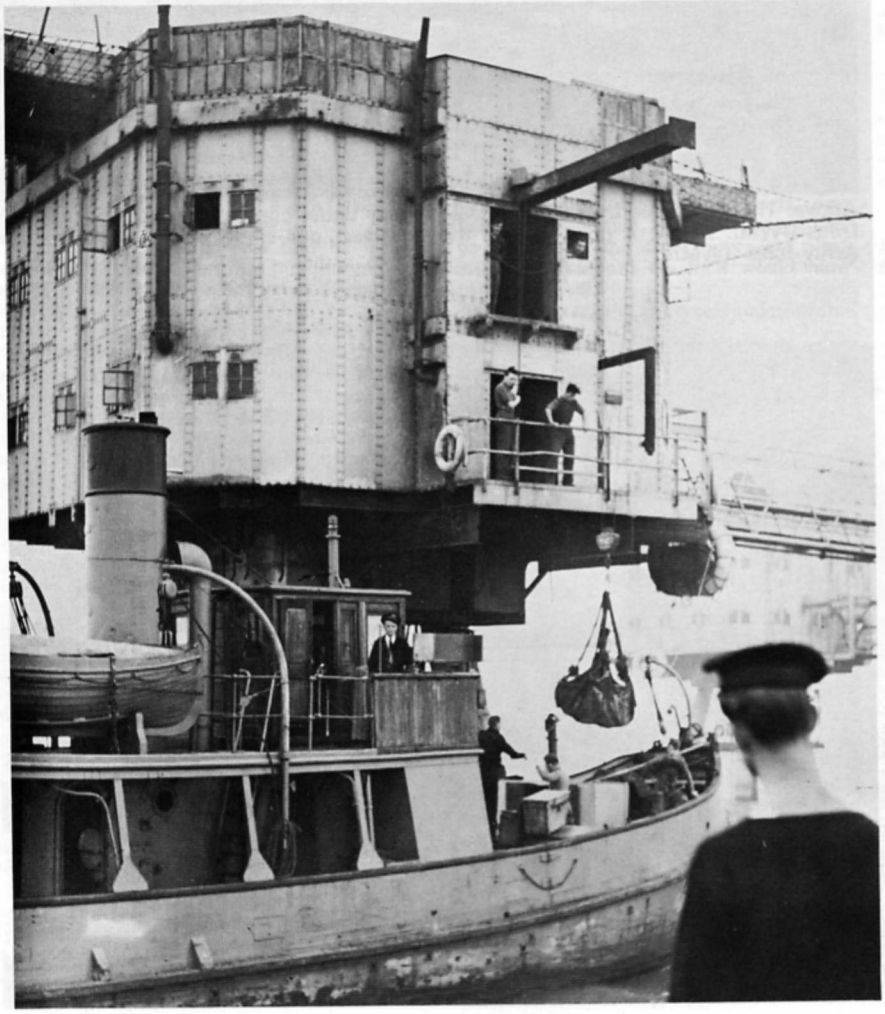
The first tower had been towed down from Gravesend during the night. Soon after dawn the three 1,000 horse-power tugs in charge of it came to a stop. Those sailors, whose duties kept them in the area saw four ack-ack gunners and one civilian operate each of the eight winches in each of the camels, and slowly the tower sank into between 25 and 35 feet of low-tide water.

In the next few days six more towers gathered round the first—four of them mounting a single 3.7 inch, one a searchlight and one radar apparatus. As each tower was sunk to the bed of the estuary, a tubular steel bridge came down the river on a barge and

Above: The Army type forts for the River Mersey under construction at Bromborough Dock (IWM). Below: A good view of the individual 'gun-emplacement' layout of the Army forts (IWM).

Below: Cat-walks connect the Army towers, in this case a searchlight tower. This photograph was taken three years after the war ended. The flag was hoisted by the Royal Navy in connection with survey work (Soldier).

Above: Spotters scan the sky for aircraft whilst the 3.7in gun-crew wait (IWM). Below: The forts were still being maintained in 1948; here rations come aboard via an electric hoist from a Royal Navy Service Corps vessel (Soldier).



was hoisted up to connect it with the others. On board each tower, as it floated into position, was a party of soldiers. No sooner had the stilts touched bottom than it became evident that the guns were ready for action.

After the war it was decided that the forts should be kept on "care and maintenance", but in the autumn of 1947 one of the Mersey forts listed over beyond the safety limit and was abandoned. All three of the Mersey forts were later demolished but the three Thames forts remained in good condition. Some of the towers developed a slight list, but in no case more than a few degrees, and they remained perfectly serviceable.

A special unit was formed, the Anti-Aircraft Fort Maintenance Detachment, whose first commander was Captain A. B. C. Sandiford, to look after the forts.

Following a collision with a Swedish ship, one of the towers in the Nore group was knocked over and the resultant scour made it a danger to navigation. In 1959 the Navy decided to remove the top living accommodation from the remaining towers and the legs were removed during 1959-61. They can now be seen abandoned at Alpha Jetty, Cliffe, Kent.

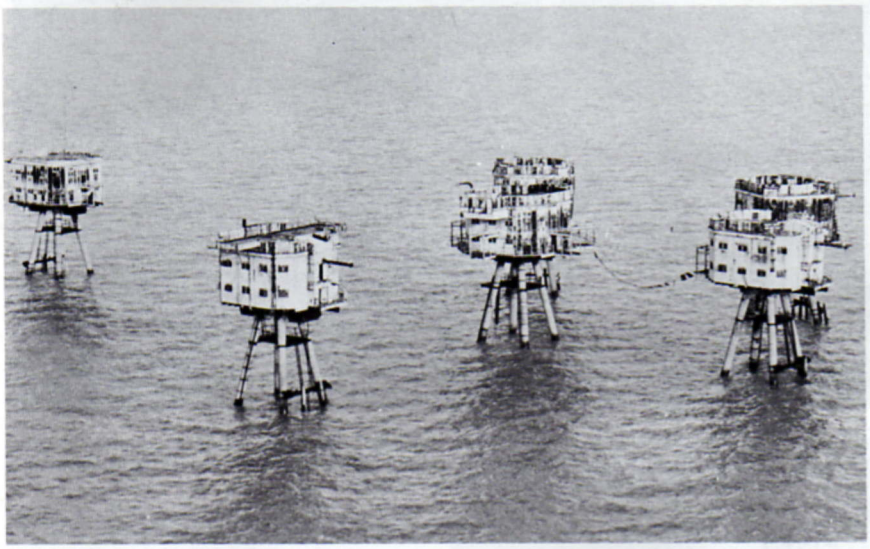
During the 50s one of the Shivering Sand towers was hit by a ship, demolishing one tower and leaving one tower separated from the others. In 1964 the Port of London Authority installed an automatic tide-gauge on this single tower and removed the bridge connection to the other towers.

It was the coming of the pirate radio ships that gave the estuary forts a new lease of illicit life. After Radio Caroline anchored the Fredericia in Felixstowe Bay, Easter 1965, others with pirate broadcasting on their minds looked to the less expensive investment of squatting on the Thames Estuary forts and fitting them out with transmitters, quarters, aerials and generators. In fairly quick succession, the Shivering Sand fort was occupied by Radio City, Red Sand Fort by Radio 390 and Roy Bates, a Southend entrepreneur, set up shop in the Knock John.

There was some doubt about City and 390 being inside the 'three mile limit' but Knock John was quickly ruled as being inside the

Below: Some of the stamps issued by Roy Bates on 'Sealand'—Roughs Tower which can be seen off the coast at Felixstowe on a fine day.

Above: Another photograph taken inside the quarters of an Army fort in the post-war care and maintenance period. Each fort was built for a garrison of 150 men (Soldier).



Above: Shivering Sands Tower photographed in 1973—one tower was hit by a ship and the Port of London Authority removed the bridge connections. Below: The bases from the Army type Nore fort, which was demolished thirteen years ago, were taken to Cliffe, Kent, where the editor photographed them in November 1973.

jurisdiction of the United Kingdom. Bates looked further afield and after much determination got a foothold on the Roughs Tower — the very first of the naval forts to be located. Twenty years of dereliction had left the fort in poor shape. The steel upperworks were very rusty, graffiti dating over the years was scrawled on every flat surface. But the two concrete legs of the tower were dry and there was plenty of room below to shelter from the cruel east winds.

While Bates was ashore getting his logistics prepared, pirate radio operator Ronan O'Rahilly, of Radio Caroline fame, commissioned a boarding party and occupied Roughs Tower. The rumour went that O'Rahilly was going to run a high class gambling joint on the fort to which patrons would be airlifted by helicopter.

A demolition squad boarded the tower, gas bottles and all, and within a few days the lantern section and right down to the deckhouse roof was cut off, the rubbish tipped in the sea and a helipad marked out on the diagonal space. A temporary aerial was mounted to deter any unauthorised 'copter landings and provide a secret radio link with the shore.

Over the following months a real life swashbuckling battle ensued between O'Rahilly's agents and Bates' men. First Bates was in possession, then O'Rahilly. One night there was a distress call to Walton-on-the-Naze lifeboat to rescue one of O'Rahilly's men trapped half way up the winch basket between tug and deck while guns blazed and Molotov cocktails were thrown, and the tug backed off to a safe distance. The Walton lifeboat retired quickly after an assurance that the trapped man would be allowed aboard the rescue boat. After that the battles ceased and Bates remained in charge.

He proclaimed Roughs Tower a principality, calling it Sealand, and even issued postage stamps, which the International Postal Union never recognised. Never once has the Roughs been left without one of the Bates family being aboard. Bates still occupies the tower even today, and except for a court case brought by Trinity House, who successfully prosecuted Bates for illegally using firearms against its men changing an obstruction buoy near the fort, Bates has slipped from the news.

The authorities tried desperately to rule that Roughs Tower was inside British territorial waters. As far back at 1965 a special committee was formed at the Admiralty to consider how best the Roughs could be re-occupied and destroyed to end the scandalous goings on between the rival factions fighting for its possession. But even by revising the 'inclusion' line—a theoretical line drawn from headland to headland, Roughs just lay a few hundred yards outside. Because of the political controversy, and the forthcoming Bill in Parliament which Edward Short had devised to outlaw the pirate radio stations, Bates was left alone.

The Sunk Head tower was also occupied for a brief period by a group calling itself Radio Essex. There was even talk of a pirate television station which could be received on BBC 1 channels after the corporation had closed down for the night. As a radio station it lacked capital and advertising, and the principle technical man in the Radio Essex group fell ill one night while on the tower. He was taken ashore and before he could return, the army began a swift 'practice operation' using helicopters and support vessels.

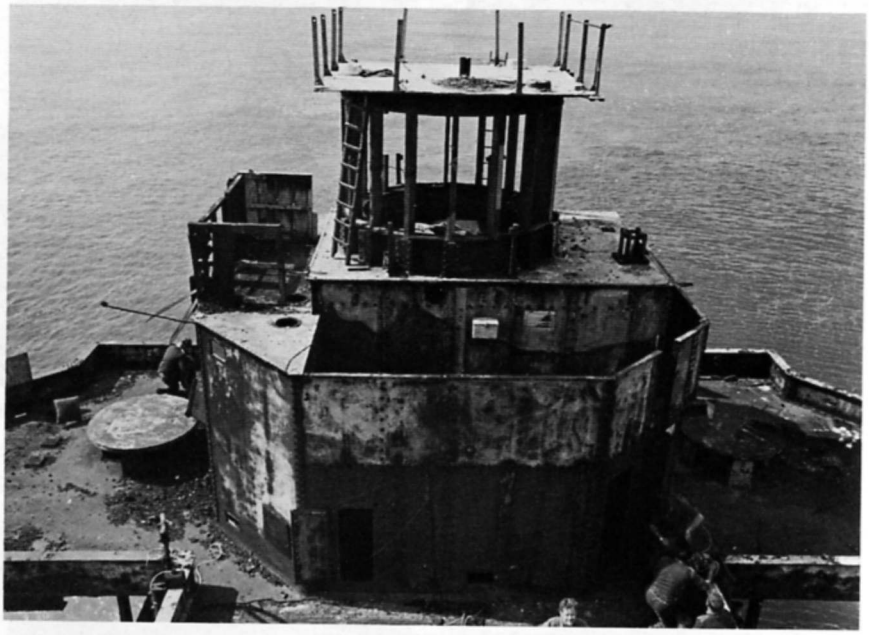
Sunk Head tower was clearly inside the revised base line the Admiralty committee had drawn up and armed with this knowledge the army demolition crews moved in to bring the tower to an unusable state.

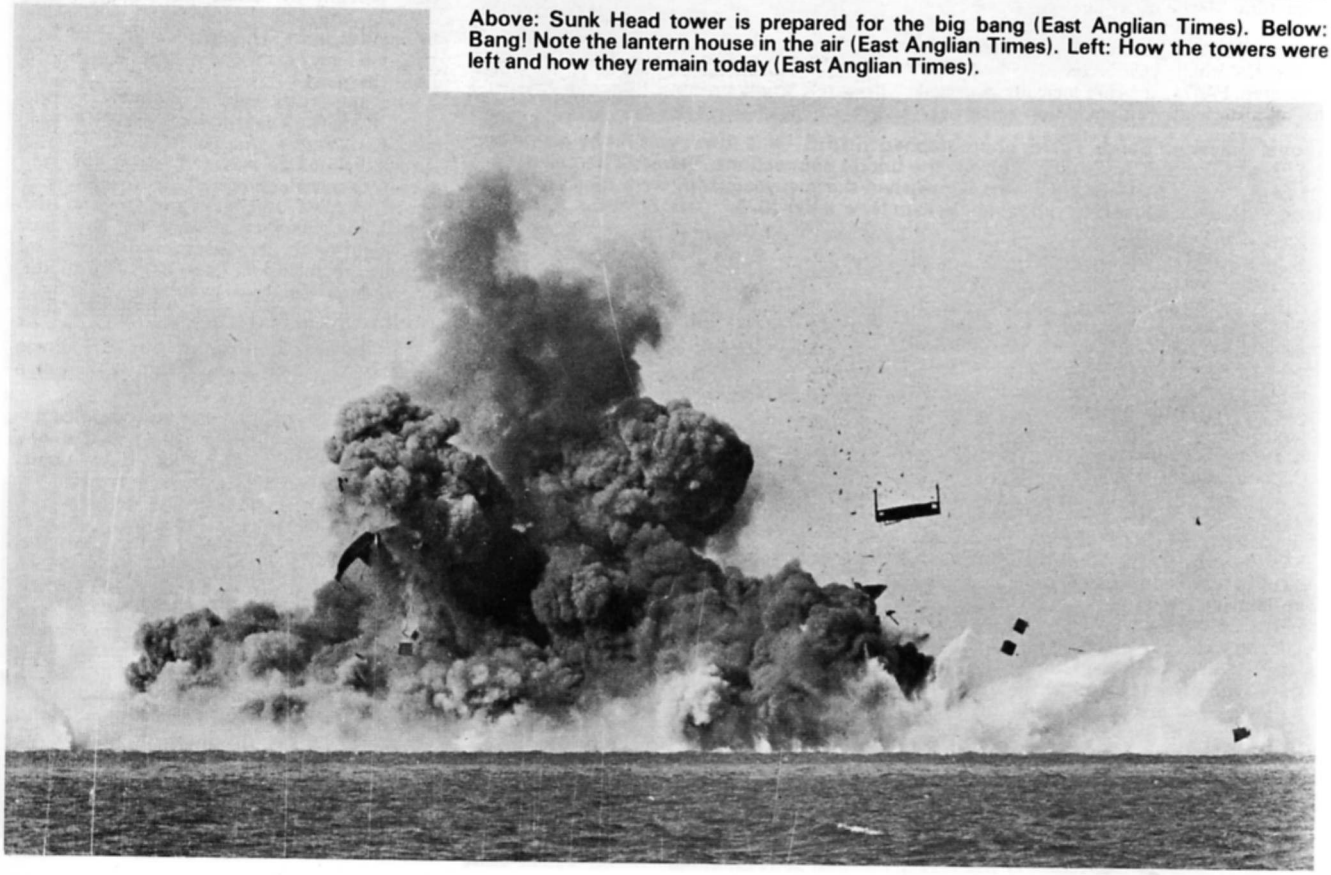
It took two attempts. The first explosion in 1967 merely rattled a few rickety bits of steel on the superstructure. Determined to carry out their mission, the army loaded the tower

Above: Roughs Tower, painted bright blue, with the 'helipad' as it is today. Right: Knock John complete with guns. The landing stages and ladders on all the remaining forts have been destroyed or dismantled to stop boarders.

with plastic and gelignite, and under the watching eyes of the Press and TV, set off a gigantic explosion which sent the whole upper deck high into the air, raining debris and broken concrete on the watchers supposedly at a safe distance. A wreck buoy now marks the line of debris.

The last time that officialdom took a look at the towers was during the investigation by Suffolk Police into the so-called 'Suitcase Murder'. No clues or suspects were found hiding on them, and now, except for an eagle-eyed watch by the Waterguard of the Customs and Excise Branch, anxious to prevent the towers from being used as staging posts between foreign ships and local boatmen, all is quiet.





Above: Sunk Head tower is prepared for the big bang (East Anglian Times). Below: Bang! Note the lantern house in the air (East Anglian Times). Left: How the towers were left and how they remain today (East Anglian Times).

AFTER THE BATTLE

PRESERVATION

The Battle of Britain memorial flight

The Memorial Flight was first formed at RAF Biggin Hill in 1957. It then consisted of two Spitfire PR Mk 19s, PM631 and PS853, a pair of LF 16Es, SL574 and SL674 and a single Hurricane Mk IIB, LF363.

The flight remained at the historic wartime sector station until 1958, when it moved briefly to North Weald, with Martlesham Heath becoming the home base later that year.

The fighters regularly led the annual Battle of Britain flypast over London until 1959, when SL574 suffered a forced-landing on a cricket pitch at Downham, near Bromley, after the flypast on September 20. Amid protests, the RAF decided, for safety reasons, to drop memorial flight aircraft from the event. Both Spitfire 16s were retired, the repaired SL574 going to Bentley Priory and SL674 back to Biggin Hill as a gate guardian.

By 1960, the depleted flight had moved to Horsham St. Faith and finally became established at Coltishall on April 30, 1963. The trio was joined by a further Spitfire in 1965 when Mk Vb AB910 was presented by the British Aircraft Corporation. Two years later Mk IIA, P3750, was added after its stint in the film 'Battle of Britain'. In April 1972, the last Hurricane built, Mk IIB PZ865, 'joined up' again. The most recent acquisition by the Coltishall unit is the RAF's flyable Lancaster, PA474, it being logically reasoned that all historic aircraft could best be serviced and maintained in one place.

With seven aircraft, the spares for which are rapidly becoming unavailable, the work of the flight personnel is nothing short of miraculous at times. The bulk of servicing work is carried out in the 'closed' winter months after a display season. The basic cycle consists of a primary inspection after a period of 10 hours flying time or three months, whichever is sooner, involving some 150 man-hours of work; a minor inspection annually or after 40 flying hours, requiring 1,250 man hours and a major inspection after four years or 160 flying hours, involving 3,000 man hours—nothing is left to chance with aircraft that are irreplaceable.

Coltishall does not boast the special tools and manuals required for major inspections and these are carried out elsewhere; for example when Spitfire 19 PS853 was due for one in December 1971, RAF Kemble took it on. The other Mk 19 had the same treatment there immediately afterwards.

When one considers that the youngest aircraft on the flight is now 28 years old, it is to the credit of Flying Officer Des Hinchlewood and his team of technicians that items long out of production, including brake pads, main and tailwheel tyres, propellors and oil seals, always seem to turn up when they are needed.

Each aircraft is allowed to fly for only 40 hours every year, and pilots must maintain their ability to fly and display each type in 24 hours annually, or up to two hours per month.

Above: An impressive and unusual picture of all six aircraft of the Battle of Britain Flight stationed at Coltishall. From bottom to top—two early Spitfires AB910 and P7350; the last remaining airworthy Hurricanes, PZ865 and LF363; followed by two post war Spitfires PM631 and PS853 (Crown Copyright).

Above: Nearly its last flight. Spitfire SL574 on the cricket field at Bromley in 1959 (Press Association). Below: 'The last of the many!' Hurricane PZ865 and Spitfire AB910 at a Yeovilton air day (R.W. Cranham).

Spitfire PR Mk 19 and Hurricane IIA over the south coast during July 1973 (Ministry of Defence).

Even fully-qualified line pilots need as much time as possible on a machine like the Hurricane and it is to their credit that displays are as good as they are, considering the small amount of practise time allowed. There is, however, no shortage of volunteers! Airframes of such machines must, of course, be treated with care as they would soon have to be grounded if the 40 hours a year rule was not in force.

CHEQUERED BACKGROUNDS

All aircraft in the Battle of Britain Flight have histories that can be traced back to their original production in the 1940s and it is interesting to record some details of their service lives and travels before coming to Coltishall.

The most authentic aircraft is the Spitfire II, P7350. It was the 51st Mk IIa, built at Castle Bromwich in January 1940.

Delivered to No 266 (Rhodesia) Squadron at Hornchurch, it saw action with that unit in the Battle of Britain and subsequently flew in the markings of Nos 603 (City of Edinburgh), 616 (County of South Yorkshire) and 64 Sqdns. From 1941 until the end of the war it was used by the Central Gunnery School and thereafter as a trainer until 1947 when it was sold as scrap.

It did not, however, go the way of so many wartime aircraft, but was presented by scrap dealers John Dale Ltd to RAF Colerne, where it remained as a non-flying exhibit for 20 years. The civil registration G-AWIJ was allotted for flying scenes in the Battle of Britain Film, after suitable renovation. On completion of shooting, the aircraft became part of the flight. It now flies coded as ZH-T of its original unit, No 266 Sqdn.

The Castle Bromwich plant also built the famous Mk Vb, AB910 which, after service with Nos 222 (Natal), 130 (Punjab) and 133 (Eagle) squadrons, three Canadian units, Nos 242, 416 and 402, as well as Nos 527 and 52 Sqdns and No 61 OTU, was sold in 1947 to Group-Captain A. H. Wheeler as G-AISU. The aircraft was actually built as a Mk IIb and modified to Vb standard by the fitting of a 1,440 hp Merlin 46M engine. The machine was civilianised at White Waltham and a Certificate of Airworthiness was issued in October 1947.

Group-Captain Wheeler used it as an air race mount and it was fitted with a Merlin 55M driving a four-blade airscrew in May 1950, once the power plant of a Sea Balliol trainer. It passed to Vickers' ownership and the firm, then part of BAC, presented it to the RAF in 1965. Now flying regularly with the flight, AB910 carries the codes of No 92 Sqdn.

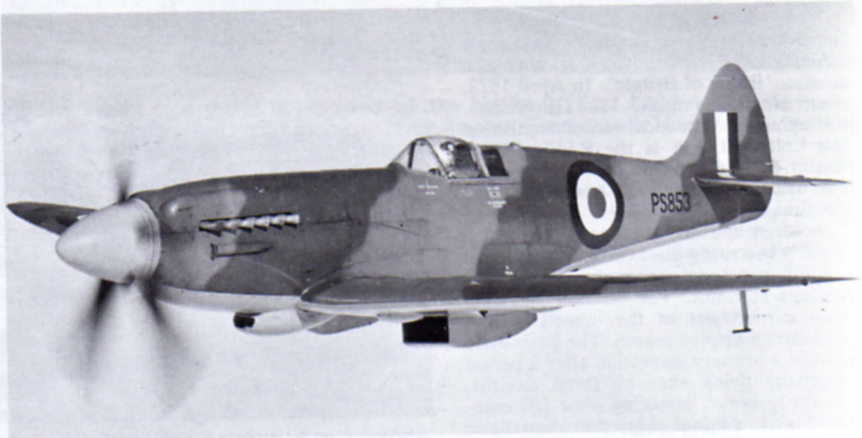
On April 4, 1945, AB910 was involved in one of the most bizarre flying incidents when a WAAF, Margaret Horton, 'flew' for 10 minutes clinging to its tailplane. Adopting the standard procedure of sitting on the tail to keep it down while the Spitfire's engine was run up, Miss Horton was carried aloft as a result of a misunderstood signal from the pilot. To allay any panic, the control tower did not inform the pilot of his passenger. Unaware, he landed safely and was only told of the occurrence during the official inquiry.

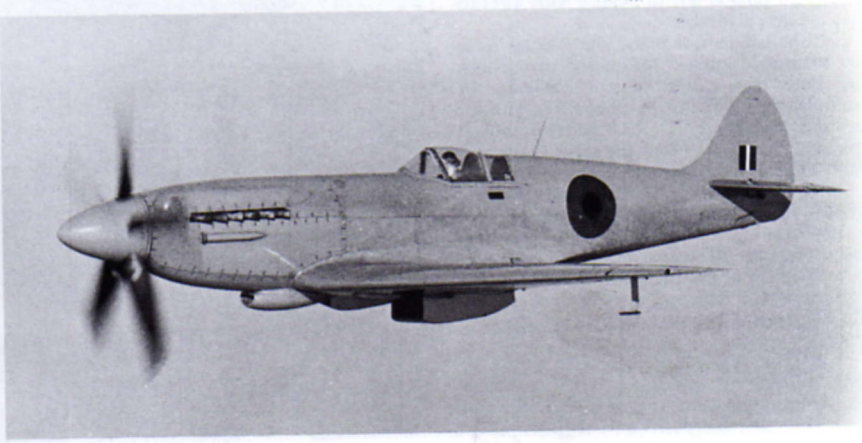
Both PR 19s were built in 1945 and soldiered on in their unarmed photographic reconnaissance role until the 1950s. One of the last operational flights by RAF Spitfires was undertaken by PS853 as part of the Meteorological Flight which flew from Hooton Park and Woodvale, on June 9, 1957. The aircraft was then grounded and presented to RAF West Raynham as a gate guardian.

Having been maintained in excellent condition, it was able to rejoin the Memorial Flight in May 1964. As the only non-camouflaged aircraft in the flight, PS853 now sports Photographic Reconnaissance blue paintwork.

Hooton Park and Woodvale also saw PM631 flying on meteorological duties after the war, following its delivery to Benson for PR work in January 1945. It was used by No 6 MU until 1949, then No 203 AFS before returning to more weather flying. It joined the MF in 1957 as one of the original five aircraft and is currently to be seen in the codes of No 11 Sqdn.

Neither of the Hurricanes can claim genuine Battle of Britain participation, although the oldest, LF363, saw operational service. Built at Langley as a Mk IIC fighter bomber, it went to No 309 (Polish) Sqdn, coded WC-F, in February 1944. It did a stint with Waterbeach station flight after service with No 41 OTU in 1945 and participated in the films 'Angels One-Five', 'Reach For The Sky', and 'The One That Got Away'. Parts from Mk II Z3682 helped to keep it flying and the Memorial Flight took it upon its formation. Now painted as LE-D, LF363





'Then and now' Above: Spitfire PR Mk 19 PS853 in the colours given to it when first preserved. Below: as it appears today in an authentic PRU blue (Ministry of Defence).

represents the personal aircraft of Douglas Bader when he commanded No 242 (Canadian) Sqdn.

The 12,780th and last Hurricane rolled out was Mk IIC PZ865, 'The Last of the Many' and, along with Spitfire AB910, is probably the most well-known aircraft in the flight. Never, in fact, issued to an operational RAF unit, it first flew at Langley in August 1944 and later appeared in blue with gold trim paintwork, registered G-AMAU. Maintained in first-class condition by Hawker Aircraft since the war, it was a 'natural' for the Battle of Britain film and came on the flight's strength in April 1972. The lack of original Merlin engine spares is reflected in the six exhaust stubs per fuselage side instead of the correct three per side, a feature of LF363 and AB910 today. The last Hurricane is now decorated as DT-A of No 257 Sqdn, in the personal markings of Squadron Leader Stanford Tuck, DSO, DFC.

THE HEAVY BRIGADE

If the Spitfire and Hurricane are the two most famous British fighters of WW2, the Lancaster shares that claim in the heavy bomber class and, with good maintenance facilities established at Coltishall, it was decided in late 1972 to have the remaining flying example, PA474, based there.

One of 500 Lancaster Mk Is ordered from Vickers Armstrong (Chester) in April 1943, PA474 was, in common with many others of its production batch, modified for Far East operations as part of 'Tiger Force', the RAF element in the invasion of Japan. After the war, it was again modified for photographic reconnaissance work and joined No 82 Squadron, with which it undertook a 1,216,000 square mile photo-survey of Africa, accompanied by other Lancaster PR.Is.

After return to the UK, PA474 was loaned to Flight Refuelling Ltd and then passed to the College of Aeronautics, Cranfield, to be used as a flying test bed for wing sections of the Handley Page H.P. 115, carrying the single fuselage code 'M'. It was taken over by No 15 MU at Wroughton and then went to the RAF Museum repository at Henlow, Beds.

Allocated as a memorial aircraft to RAF Waddington, the base of No 44 Sqdn, the first to receive Lancasters during the war, PA474 was restored in the camouflage and markings it now bears, representing Lancaster Mk I R5508/KM-B flown by No 44's CO. It was with the aircraft that Squadron-Leader J. D. Nettleton was awarded the VC for his part in a raid on Augsburg on April 17, 1942, and PA474 remains as a fitting tribute to the courage of all Lancaster crews.

J. C. SCUTTS

Above: Hurricane II LF363 shines due to its polyurethane paint finish used today by the flight to preserve the aircraft, although not truly authentic.

The latest addition to the Flight is Lancaster PA474 from Waddington shown above in its present day colour scheme. Below: the same aircraft used as a test vehicle for a Handley-Page long-range wing, photographed at Cranfield, Bedfordshire.

AFTER THE BATTLE

PERSONALITY

Lieutenant Colonel David Niven

'The First of the Few'. David Niven playing a Wing Commander, with Leslie Howard, who was star, producer and director of this film, during its production. (IWM)

David Niven was born in 1910, the son of a French mother and whose father was killed landing at Suvla at Gallipoli whilst serving with the Berkshire Yeomanry in the First World War. Whilst still a child he experienced the German Zeppelin air raids on London.

Because of his unruly behaviour at school, when he was twelve his mother sent him to sit for the entrance exam to the Royal Naval College. He failed miserably. Later whilst a boarder at Stowe School he passed the entrance exam to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst and became one of the first three Stowe boys to gain commissions in the Regular Army.

The Cadet under-officer in charge of the Junior platoon to which he was first assigned was named Wright. Wright later changed his name to Baillee-Stewart and joining the Seaforth Highlanders, was caught selling military secrets to the Germans, was court martialled and became the imprisoned 'Officer of the Tower' at the Tower of London.

For his first eighteen months at Sandhurst, David Niven was a member of No. 1 Company. After his initial ten weeks' square bashing, he was promoted to Lance-Corporal. Instruction in riding, military law, battle tactics, organisation and administration followed.

It was at Sandhurst that he first began his stage career, with performances in the College concerts.

During the Intermediate Term, he was promoted to full Corporal and there followed a six month appointment as Commandants' orderly to General Sir Eric Girdwood. His company became champion company whilst David Niven was at Sandhurst and all its cadets were privileged to wear a coveted red lanyard.

Although he had hoped to serve in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, at the age of eighteen he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Highland Light Infantry. Two months before his nineteenth birthday he embarked on the *Kaisar-i-Hind* for Malta. Here he was assigned to Company C when he arrived at Floriana Barracks and given charge of No. 3 platoon.

His only piece of active service during the next four years occurred the day after he arrived. He had posted his platoon to guard a customs building in the harbour, when some local hooligans approached with iron bars and stones. They were quickly dispersed by a fierce Scottish trooper.

It was during these early weeks at Malta that he received help and advice from a young Captain R. E. Urquhart, who was later to lead the airborne landing at Arnhem.

During a training session in the hills, Niven's personality came to the fore when he was instructed to advance with his platoon across a mile and a half of open ground. Told he could use a road if he wished, out of sight of the Colonel, he hid his platoon on the local bus which drove past the unsuspecting officers. Again out of sight, the men dismounted and creeping behind the officers, charged from thirty yards. On his arrival Niven admits he over did it with his remark to the Colonel, 'Bang bang you're dead!'

In December 1932 the battalion was ordered home and was stationed at Citadel Barracks, Dover, where a new commanding officer was appointed, Colonel Telfer-Smollett, who began to shake the battalion out of its 'Maltese malaise'. It was during his period at Dover on his frequent trips to London that Niven became more involved with the stage through meeting Ann Todd and Laurence Olivier. Later following a posting to the Machine Gun School at Netheravon, he was introduced to Douglas Fairbanks.

Shortly afterwards he was persuaded to spend a Sunday as an extra in a racing film — *All the Winners* — returning for parade the next day.

The pull of the London scene versus his Army career became too strong to resist. Following an incident during the last week of the Machine Gun course when the lecturing officer, asking for any questions received the reply from Niven 'Could you tell me the time please, I have to catch a train', Niven sent his resignation to the Colonel.

He went to Canada and then to New York. America was, however, still in the grip of the depression and there were millions of US citizens unemployed. The prospects of work for a foreigner could not have been worse.

He first worked as a wine salesman and later whilst in California seeking work as an actor, having had no real previous experience to boast about, he awoke one morning to find *HMS Norfolk* at anchor off Santa Barbara. Invited aboard that evening for a party, he stayed too long and when he awoke next morning found the ship at sea. It was making a rendevous with *HMS Bounty* an MGM replica ship made for the filming of '*Mutiny on the Bounty*' and the meeting between the old and modern war vessels was a publicity stunt. He went on board and thereafter got the reputation of being 'the first man to crash Hollywood in a battleship!'

Although he was given a screen test the US Immigration Authorities caught up with him and gave him twenty-four hours to leave the country. He went to Mexico and waited weeks until his Resident Aliens Permit was granted early in 1935. Although accepted and enrolled with the studios as Anglo Saxon Type No. 2008 his first role as a professional actor was a Mexican — he earned $2.50.

These were the golden days of Hollywood and after many disappointments he was finally given a seven year contract with MGM.

The Carentan bridge photographed in 1944 which David Niven had to cross frequently during his liaison duties in Normandy (IWM).

His first speaking part was three words in *Without Regret*.

Within four years he had risen to become a leading Hollywood star when war was declared by Britain against Germany. Niven returned to Europe via Italy, not then in the war. He played golf twice with Count Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law, before travelling across France to Paris. From there he travelled by mail plane to Hendon. When he arrived in London two of his very successful films *'Dawn Patrol'* and *'Batchelor Mother'* were showing and the press soon caught up with him. He wanted to join the RAF but they had a phobia about actors at that time. The press treated him rather unkindly and it was not until a chance meeting on the balcony of the Cafe de Paris night club in London, that Lieutenant-Colonel J. Bosvile of the Rifle Brigade asked him to join them. Niven was anxious about the childish black marks chalked up against him during his previous military career — three weeks later however, he reported for duty at Tidworth, a Lieutenant.

In February 1940 he was invited to a dinner at which Winston Churchill and Mrs. Churchill were present. David Niven was embarrassed when in front of the gathered guests, Churchill spotted him and rose from the table. Walking up to Niven he shook his hand. 'Young man, you did a very fine thing to give up a most promising career to fight for your country' and continued 'Mind you, had you not done so it would have been despicable!'

Thereafter he had several private garden walks with Churchill and was able to arrange private showings of Churchill's favourite films.

During the 'phoney' war Niven felt the beginnings of boredom with the training battalion which had previously brought him to resign from the army. Then in May 1940, the Germans attacked — Niven was picked to take replacement troops to Dunkirk for the First Battalion, but events moved too quickly.

Shortly after the evacuation, he was shown a document calling for volunteers for a new 'elite force' of a highly secret nature which was to be the beginning of the formation of the Commandos. He added his name to the list, was accepted, and ordered by the War Office to proceed to Lochailort Castle in Scotland, for special training.

Two months vigorous training in the Highlands followed, his instructors at the time amongst others included David Stirling of later Desert Raid fame, Colonel Newman who was awarded the VC for the St. Nazaire raid and Lord Lovat who was to lead commandos at Dieppe and Normandy.

In September 1940, David Niven was promoted to Captain and was given the job of liaison officer between M.O.9 (the War Office department responsible for the Commandos and their operations) and the Commando Units themselves. His first assignment at Combined Operation headquarters was briefing John Durnford-Slater (later Brigadier) of No. 3 Commando for the first Commando raid to Guernsey.

In September whilst the Battle of Britain was being waged in the skies above, he married Primmie, his first wife who was serving as a WAAF.

His new uncle by marriage, was Robert Laycock then a Captain in the Royal Horse Guards, whom he persuaded to join the Commandos. Five years later Laycock was to become Major-General, Chief of Combined Operations and have to his credit the legendary raid 200 miles behind enemy lines to blow up Rommel's HQ in North Africa.

It was then that a new highly secret organisation was formed to help deal with the very real danger of the German invasion. Called 'Phantom' it was the brainchild of Colonel Hopkinson who realised during the Dunkirk retreat, that if a General in command is not receiving a steady flow of reliable information, he cannot contribute much towards the outcome of the battle. Lack of communications makes him powerless.

'Phantom', formed to solve this problem, was to be composed of a number of highly mobile squadrons of 'officer patrols' to be equipped with expert despatch riders, radios and, as a last resort, carrier pigeons. The commanding officer of 'Phantom' was to stay at the General's right hand and if a situation at a certain point needed clarifying, the nearest 'Phantom' squadron would find out what was going on.

After a period of intensive training, Niven was promoted to Major commanding 'A' Squadron of the newly formed 'Phantoms'. He was assigned to V Corps commanded by General B. L. Montgomery in the area behind Poole Harbour. Disguises were even planned if the invasion took place for the unit to go underground — Niven's being that of a vicar.

During the early war years Niven played in service backed films — *'First of the Few'* for the RAF and *'The Way Ahead'* for the Army, and additionally made speeches in factories and cinemas for various projects.

He tried to keep in touch with those of his stage and screen friends that he could and by 1944 he was joined by many American friends now in the services — James Stewart, Douglas Fairbanks, Clark Gable, John Ford and others. Guy Gibson spent a weekend with Niven and his wife after he was awarded the VC for the Dams Raid.

In the Spring of 1944 Niven was summoned to General Sir Frederick Morgan's HQ at Sunningdale where the invasion of France was being planned. He was told he was being promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel — taken out of Phantom and to report to an American General. The American, General R. Barker, explained he had been charged by General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander, to form a liaison unit between the American, Canadian and British Commanders which was later to include the French and Poles.

In the First War, private feuds had broken out between rival Generals in the British and French armies — Eisenhower did not want a repetition, and Barker's job was to smooth out all misunderstandings right down to arguments about what programmes would be broadcast by the BBC and AFN. Lieutenant-Colonel Niven was to be his No. 2 in the field.

Shortly after the Normandy landings took place, Niven embarked from Southampton in the *'Empire Battleaxe'*. Being on liaison duties between the British Second Army and the American First Army, Niven had to cross the Carentan bridge frequently whilst it was under constant German shellfire. It was here, whilst sheltering in a foxhole, that he met an

old friend who, jokingly promptly pinned the Iron Cross on his chest.

The first differences of opinion between British and Americans showed themselves in the battles around Caen and the closing of the Falaise pocket with everyone accusing everyone else of being too slow, too quick or too cautious. The arguments continued between Montgomery, Bradley and Patton with conflicting plans being put forward for the speedy ending of the war. General Barker's department had its work cut out.

David Niven followed the fighting across France, through Brussels to the Ardennes where he was caught in the 'behind the line' panic caused by Skorzeny's jeep teams. He was stopped many times in his 21st Army Group jeep and recounts one incident when identification papers meant nothing — 'Hands above your head buddy — who won the World Series in 1938?'

'I haven't the faintest idea, but I do know I made a picture with Ginger Rogers in 1938.'

'OK beat it, Dave, but watch your step!'

He crossed the Rhine at Wesel and went north to Hanover.

In September 1945 David Niven was awarded the Legion of Merit by General Barker for his services to the various units to which he had been attached.

After being demobilised, David Niven returned to America with the 101st Airborne Division on the Queen Mary to take up his film career where he left off. As a parting shot the Inland Revenue refused to confirm his sailing permit until he agreed to pay back tax on his overseas earnings back to 1934. He says it cost him several thousand pounds to spend six years in the British Army!

Above: Lieutenant-Colonel David Niven photographed in Normandy on July 5, 1944 (Associated Press). Below: Having changed his uniform, seen here during the making of 'The Guns of Navarone' on Rhodes Island with Gregory Peck (Keystone).

AFTER THE BATTLE

WRECK RECOVERY

Excavation of a German Messerschmitt Bf 109E, by the Ashford and Tenderden Recovery Group, on 7th October 1972.

As far as we can ascertain, at 9 o'clock on the morning of August 28, 1940, Hurricanes of No 501 (F) squadron were engaged in combat with Bf 109s of III/JG3 "Udet".

A 109 was seen to fall, a Hurricane following its descent. The pilot abandoned his aircraft and landed safely at Denton. Up to the time of writing this article, we have been unable to name him, but the facts we do know, however, are that he was eighteen years of age and due to be married a few days later; and that he spoke impeccable English.

The crippled fighter smashed into a kale field not twenty yards from farmer Arthur Edney of Selstead Farm, Selstead, Kent.

Fellow member Len Green, accompanied by Wilf Hallett, made enquiries at a pub in Hawkinge, and later contacted Mr Edney, who was as enthusiastic about the recovery as we were. The last recollection Arthur has of the aircraft was the thought that it was going to hit him, a bang, and being showered with debris.

Very little of the aircraft was left on the surface after the crash, so when our Group discussed the dig we all agreed it should be very interesting and fruitful.

BRENZETT MUSEUM

Top: Digging for the Messerschmitt is in progress with some parts already laid to one side (Dover Express). Above: Visitors to the Brenzett Museum examine the many relics on display.

Len Green was first to arrive at the site together with Henry Burns and the JCB digger, the day was October 7, 1972, the remainder of the Group followed soon after 8 o'clock.

The farmer had put in a marker stake so there was no question of us wasting valuable time searching for visible signs on the surface. However, after digging for four feet we found only the usual aluminium corrosion, then the digger bucket struck metal with a tell-tale 'clonk'.

The Chairman and leader of our Ashford and Tenterden Recovery Group, Mr David Buchanan, probed the bottom of the hole to find the source of the 'clonk'. He was joined by Rolly Freeman and Colin Smart with spades, and out came the first 'gem', a prop-blade. This confirmed the fighter's final resting place, and what a feat for the farmer to be able to be spot on after thirty-two years! Almost immediately two more blades were uncovered. The flint-encrusted clay had chipped them somewhat, but they were nevertheless in reasonable condition.

After another foot or so of earth had been removed, there was metal skinning from the wing leading edge and traces of oil, twisted metal and control wires. Among this metal lay a section of the main undercarriage. This was raised to the surface from a depth of seven feet, together with a considerable amount of rainwater. Once again another mass of metal was hoisted to the surface, wedged in was the tail-wheel assembly, the other oleo leg and spindle and tyre were immaculate. The tyre was whitewalled and displayed the manufacturer's name, "CONTINENTAL". Crumpled metal by this time was coming out of the hole, which was now twelve feet deep and waterlogged. Most of the metal still bore traces of camouflage, this was placed aside for other members of the Group to sort through for possible hidden relics. Down went the bucket again, this time in amongst the mud came up a crucial tag for identification purposes; it bore 9/6060, Bf 109E, DB601. This established beyond doubt that the aircraft was a Messerschmitt Bf 109E and that it was powered by a Daimler Benz DB601 engine. The time by now was approximately twelve-thirty p.m., digging operations were temporarily halted for a discussion, the point being to adopt a method of raising a section of the fuselage which bore part of the black cross and horizontal white outlined black bar, as this, we hoped, would establish that the aircraft was in fact of III/JG3 "Udet" which patrolled mainly the Pas de Calais area (Sector). This section unfortunately collapsed and the paint flaked off before anything could be done to save it.

We now adjourned for lunch and mutual commiseration on the loss of the panel.

As on all digs, the atmosphere of the era is apparent to members and spectators alike, but nostalgia or not, there was still a lot of work to be done and very soon after digging was resumed, two MG 17 machine guns were revealed, although recognisable they were completely smashed. The police were informed at this point, duly arrived, and took them away.

In the early afternoon, compressed air bottles bearing the date of manufacture as being December 19, 1939, also oxygen bottles similarly marked, all in remarkable condition, were brought out.

At approximately two-thirty, we reached the cockpit area. A full set of armour plate was found; it is interesting to note that one half of the plate bears the imprint of a .303 bullet which had connected sideways on. By this time we were now finding such items as instruments, some completely shattered, some virtually intact with their faces and needles undamaged. The top of the control column, although it had been cleanly snapped off, still had the rubber covering in fairly good shape, also there was the firing button that was at one time connected by compressed air pipes to the guns. Other cockpit items included flattened trimming wheels, oxygen tap cages and various electrical switches. A Luftwaffe issue first aid kit came to light, containing bandages and tourniquets.

Len Green displays a propeller blade and tail-wheel assembly (Dover Express).

The hole by now was about fourteen feet deep. We should have been near the engine, but its whereabouts were not apparent, so far we had found only the smallest piece of the heavy casting used in the engine construction, it was assumed that the engine was very near complete. After a lot of clay had been removed, the digger bucket struck something very solid indeed. Myself, my father and Dennis Timms were joined by Dave Buchanan and Mick Parnell, down the hole to hand dig around the object. In the process of hand digging we came across the disintegrated radio, a flattened generator and a solitary rudder pedal. The sunlight caught a glint of metal. After some careful clearing of mud, a corner of one cylinder block showed itself. We dug carefully around each side until enough of the engine was exposed, so that a half-inch guage steel band could be attached to both digger arm and the engine crankshaft gearing. The digger could not obtain a good enough purchase to beat the suction and weight of the engine. It sank into the soil and required two Land Rovers harnessed in tandem using the arm as a lever to shift the digger out of trouble.

Daylight was now closing and another attempt that day was impossible. Digging was resumed on Sunday October 8 at 8 o'clock.

Henry Burns decided that we would need his Drott Excavator to shift the stubborn engine. After a short period during which time everyone concerned decided refreshment was the next priority, the Drott arrived. The steel bands were attached once again to the crankshaft and to the Drott. With a hearty heave the engine moved a fraction but the Drott stood virtually on end. Mr Burns, controlling the Drott with one hand and clinging on with the other, was wearing a disbelieving and somewhat anxious expression (wouldn't you?). The suction and weight proved too much for the steel bands and with the sound of a rifle they snapped and with a resounding thud the Drott returned to a stable and horizontal position. In a discussion with Mr Burns it was decided one final attempt would be made (brave man) using chains this time; we disliked using chains as these can do so much damage, but we had no other alternative. Both engine and Drott were chained together, then with a long succession of 'squelches' the engine gave in and the Drott easily lifted it to the surface.

On inspection the engine had suffered fire damage; ignition cables, fuel lines, etc, were severely burned, but nevertheless it was still a fairly good example of the engine.

It was now lunchtime Sunday morning. All the remains of the aircraft were loaded on to a 10 cwt lorry. The hole was back-filled and the ground was returned to as near the original as possible, which is always our policy.

Relics of this aircraft and many others are now being shown to the public at the Group's Museum at Brenzett, Romney Marsh, Kent.

M. D. TIMMS.

The Battle of Britain Museum, Chilham Castle, near Canterbury, Kent, confirm that Bf109E-4 (W.Nr. 5395) crashed near Selstead at 9.10 a.m. on August 28, 1940. The pilot being Oberlt. Erich Kircheis (Adjutant of JG51) who baled out and was taken prisoner.

III/JG3 are not known to have operated in this area on the morning in question and their losses for the day took place over the Channel. A horizontal bar, as described, indicates a II Gruppe machine, a vertical bar being tactical identification for most III Gruppe aircraft.

AFTER THE BATTLE

WAR FILMS

The Longest Day

Darryl F. Zanuck first came in contact with Cornelius Ryan's best selling book, 'The Longest Day', while on location in Africa with 'The Big Gamble'. He became immediately excited over the possibilities of the story and cabled his agent to take an option on the film rights. It turned out that the book had already been bought by French producer Raoul Levy. Zanuck acquired the story from Levy, knocked a few other 'competitors' out of the field and finally emerged as the sole owner of the unique D-Day story.

The problems of re-creating D-Day started months before the cameras turned, when Zanuck was faced with the job of collecting the necessary equipment for the picture. Even with all-out co-operation from the American, British, French and German governments, who provided 1944 material and competent technical advisors, the preparation was still immensely difficult. As Zanuck commented: 'Eisenhower had the men and he had the equipment. I have to find both!'

THE PROPS

Obtaining German armaments posed a problem. A 20 mm Wehrmacht cannon was located in Britain, captured during the war, and several 50 mm anti-aircraft guns used by the Germans were unearthed in bunkers at the Ile de Re, near La Rochelle. A Piat gun was found in a London museum and was borrowed for the filming. Plastic shells had to be made for it. Further German guns were loaned from war museums, including a German Maxim located in Paris owned by a Frenchman. The ammunition for this armoury came from America, Britain, Germany, Norway and Holland.

No fewer than 500,000 rounds of blank ammunition were stored at a Caen warehouse and hundreds of other weapons of all types had to be modified for the film. In some instances, no dummy ammunition could be found and shells had to be hand-made.

But armaments did not constitute the only problem. Such assorted items as jeeps, weapon carriers, DUKW's, half-tracks and other vehicles had to be obtained and reconditioned. Uniforms of all descriptions came from Paris. Special 'props', such as Rommel's baton, had to be made. It was copied from a photo supplied by the late Frau Rommel in Germany. German food wrappers and cigarette packets were borrowed from German museums and duplicates made again in Paris.

Two things he was unable to find. One was the Indian-type of machete knives which the Free French commandos carried during the invasion. They had obtained the long-bladed weapons while training in India. The other was a deceptively simple item—a small, 48-star American flag. It finally had to be specially made for the film. (The editor could have helped here, see page 38 *After the Battle No. 1.*)

To photograph a sequence in which three British Spitfires attack a column of German

Above: Parachutists drop again over the St. Mere Eglise square during the realistic recreation of this scene. Below: Peter Lawford (left), who portrayed Lord Lovat, has joined Richard Todd (centre), as Major John Howard, at the Caen Canal Bridge.

Above: John Wayne played the real life Lieutenant-Colonel Benjamin Vandervoort of the 82nd Airborne Division who had broken his ankle when he landed in 1944 and fought on in this condition for forty days. Below: As paratroopers hang from trees and houses, the 82nd Airborne enters St. Mere Eglise square (Studio Goron).

Below: The landing on Omaha Beach was re-enacted in Corsica where a similar coastline was found free of holidaymakers.

soldiers, Zanuck had to find three for the film. The Spitfires were finally discovered in Belgium, where they had served as target towing aircraft for the Belgian air force. They had been acquired by Pierre Laureys, a Free French air ace during the war. Laureys rented the Spitfires to Zanuck after fitting them with new engines and repainting them with the original RAF colours dominated by the Cross of Lorraine.

When the scene was shot at La Ferte Alais, some 60 miles south of Paris, Laureys himself was at the controls of one of the Spitfires. He flew the plane at a dangerously low 10 feet above the ground. On D-Day, Laureys was on exactly this kind of mission, strafing German traffic on roads leading to the Normandy beaches.

For the purposes of the film, Zanuck ordered two replica gliders built. One, a British Horsa, had a wingspan of 80 feet and the second full size glider was an American Waco CG4A.

Luckily for Zanuck, it was not necessary for 'The Longest Day' to reproduce the huge air armada that droned over occupied France on D-Day. The invasion took place under a grey, cloudy sky, and the thousands of bombers and fighter planes coming over from England could only be heard and not seen by the men below. There was virtually no German air opposition since Goering had ordered his planes to be moved inland to escape the Allies' almost continuous day and night attacks on the German airfields.

LOCATIONS

The first location for 'The Longest Day' was in Corsica where, with the co-operation of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, Zanuck was able to reconstruct a part of the massive assault on Omaha Beach. The film was taking advantage of 6th Fleet manoeuvres in the Mediterranean where twenty-five American ships were assembled for naval and marine exercises. Six cameras turned as 1,600 marines poured from landing craft and charged the obstacle-strewn beach as explosions ripped the water and sand around them.

The obstacles, identical with those used by Rommel to protect Omaha Beach, were put up by the company and the explosions were special effects. Nevertheless, the marines felt that these realistic additions to their exercise contributed materially to the training of the men. There was excitement on the beach when frog-men attached to the fleet discovered an unexploded 500 lb bomb buried in the sands. It was exploded before filming and the exercise resumed.

Prior to the Corsica location, a Zanuck unit had flown briefly to Cyprus to film a huge British parachute jump over the island. More than 1,000 men were caught by the cameras as they landed.

The first of the authentic locations was St. Mere Eglise where, during the night of June 6, American paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st airborne divisions dropped. A house in the town had caught fire and, as it burned brightly, the alarmed German guards could see the GIs floating down out of the darkness. A terrible battle ensued in which many were killed.

The scene was re-enacted with great realism in the film. French stunt men and paratroopers jumped from helicopters over the brightly-lit main square with its ancient church. Monsieur Hairon's house that had burned was re-built again and blazed during the filming. Due to the same type of winds that had carried the Americans off their course during D-Day, the paratroopers in the film often landed far away from their objective and were found hanging from roofs, power-lines and trees in the vicinity.

Red Buttons in this sequence had the role of Private John Steele, whose parachute draped

itself over the church steeple and held him there suspended for ten hours while the bells rang in his ears and the Germans shot at him from below.

James Gavin was second in command of the 82nd Airborne and jumped with his men near St. Mere Eglise. In 'The Longest Day' Gavin was played by Henry Fonda. Another officer in St. Mere Eglise—Lieutenant-Colonel Benjamin Vandervoort of the 82nd Airborne was portrayed in the film by John Wayne. Vandervoort was an officer who had broken an ankle in the jump, but continued to fight on all day, being pulled around in an ammunition trailer.

The people of St. Mere Eglise, enthusiastically re-living their past, got little sleep while the film was being made in their town. A number of the French people who had endured the occupation, and who were in the town when the invasion came, offered details of the night when they were liberated. The reaction of the French to seeing the field-grey Wehrmacht uniforms again in their midst was anything but favourable. At St. Mere Eglise, when the Germans first appeared, an announcement had to be made over the loudspeaker to explain that these were Frenchmen in German uniforms.

From St. Mere Eglise, where photography took place mostly at night, the unit moved to Pointe du Hoe, where four stars, Robert Wagner, Paul Anka, Fabian and Tommy Sands, played U.S. Rangers. Pointe du Hoe is a 100-ft cliff rising from a narrow, pebbly beach. On top, the Germans had constructed heavy bunkers and a complicated system of trenches and defence works. The Allies knew that the Germans had six heavy naval guns there, which could dominate Omaha and Utah beaches. The Rangers were sent in to blow up the guns. When they got to the top, suffering heavy losses, they found that the Germans had never installed the guns.

Real U.S. Rangers joined the stars and other GIs in the re-staging of the daring assault on the cliffs. Wagner, Anka, Fabian and Sands had to climb the rock on ropes and there were a number of accidents.

To facilitate the work, and also to save the crew from a possible accident when the tide came in, Zanuck ordered a huge crane to be built. It dominated the cliff and was capable of lowering a large platform down to the beach. On top, the real German bunkers, partly smashed by the heavy Allied air and naval bombardment that preceded the attack, were used for the film.

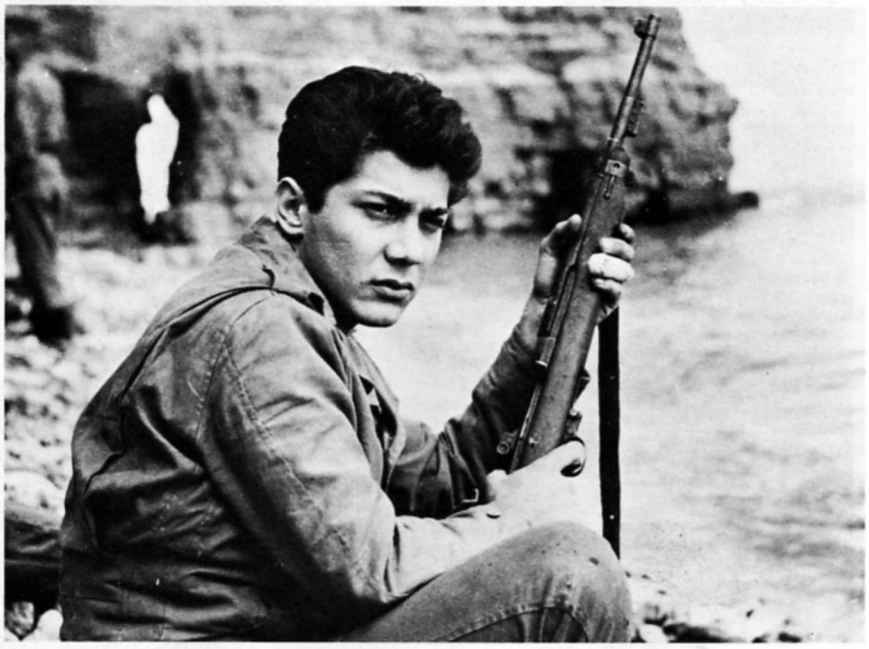
Even as Pointe du Hoe was echoing to the sounds of war again, another 'Longest Day' film crew began work at the Caen Canal Bridge. Here, early in the morning of June 6, 1944, a glider-borne force of British infantry under the command of Major John Howard, surprised the Germans. They held the crossing for thirteen hours until British commandos under Lord Lovat arrived from the beaches.

A sentimental reunion took place at the bridge, now generally known as Pegasus Bridge. Both Lord Lovat and Major Howard had been invited by Zanuck to attend the filming on the actual site. The men had not met since D-Day. In the film, Lovat is played by Peter Lawford and Major Howard by Richard Todd. Richard Todd was with the 6th Airborne Division and joined Major Howard at Pegasus Bridge a few hours after the three gliders had crashed at the bridge. Richard Todd is to be a future 'personality' in *After the Battle.*

The next 'Longest Day' location was at the little fishing village of Port-en-Bessin, where Zanuck's men had reconstructed the Ouistreham Casino. The Germans used it as their command post and the Free French, coming ashore here, levelled it during the battle. Ouistreham itself was almost completely destroyed. It is today a holiday resort and Zanuck was forced to move a few miles to

Above: The realistic strafing sequence with Pierre Laureys at the controls of one of the Spitfires. Below: Hans Christian Blech who played the real-life Major Werner Pluskat of the German 352nd Division, was at the receiving end!

Below: Paul Anka, who portrays a US Ranger, on the beach at Pointe du Hoe (Studio Goron).



Above: Christian Marquand played Commander Phillipe Kieffer who commanded the Free French Commandos on D-Day. He is seen here re-enacting the attack on the Ouistreham Casino, but actually filmed at Port-en-Bessin.

the west to do his scene. Recreated in exact detail, the Casino cost £12,000 to put up again and construct in such a fashion that it was possible to 'collapse' in three different sections under enemy fire.

Several days at Port-en-Bessin were spent making a helicopter shot of the scene. This required all inhabitants to stay indoors for hours.

Christian Marquand played the leader of the French Commandos, Commander Philippe Kieffer, who captured the Casino.

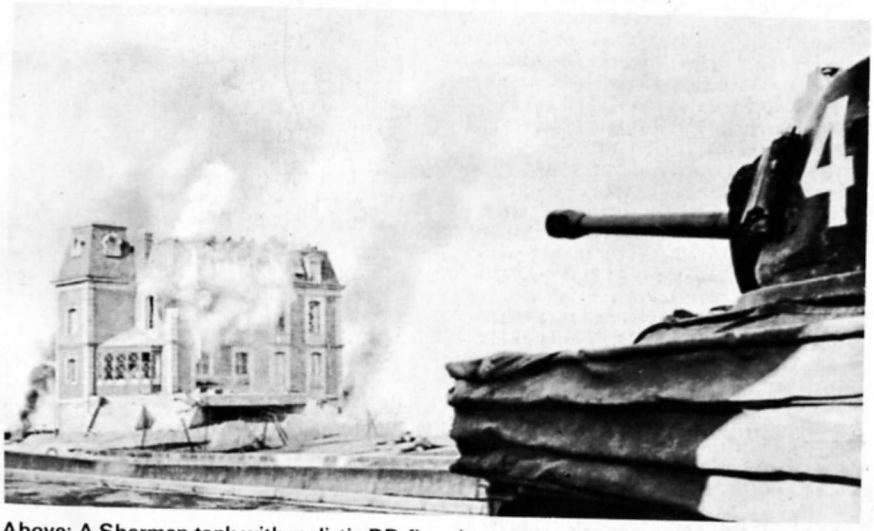
The Germans in 'The Longest Day' were played by a group of sixty specially selected Frenchmen. They underwent a three week 'basic training' course at a camp outside Paris before the picture got under way. Johnny Jendrich, a former German paratrooper, instructed the group in the handling of equipment and the proper wearing of uniforms.

Field-Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt was played by Paul Hartman and Werner Hinz, the part of Field Marshal Rommel.

After 'The Longest Day' locations in Normandy were completed, the film production moved in two directions. One unit went to the Ile de Re to complete sequences involving the storming of Omaha Beach. The second moved into the Studio de Boulogne in Paris where fifty-three sets were constructed for the remaining scenes.

It had cost over £300,000 to build these sets and the beach obstacles. The food bill for the thirty-one various locations where the film had been made totalled another £350,000. The company used a hundred thousand gallons of petrol, 110,000 lbs of plaster, 3,600 gallons of paint, 9,900 lbs of nails, 120,000 lbs of plastics. For the special effects 25,000 old car tyres were burnt and fifteen tons of explosive set off.

Zanuck took ten months to film it, used an unusually large and internationally known cast of fifty together with thousands of extras. Even with the co-operation of the US Sixth Fleet of twenty-two ships he spent £4 million on what is probably the most ambitious war film ever made.



Above: A Sherman tank with realistic DD flotation canvas fires at the mock-up Casino at Port-en-Bessin. Below: A reunion at the Caen Canal Bridge (l-r) Darryl F. Zanuck, producer, Peter Lawford, Irina Demich who played Mme L. Gille in the film (renamed Janine Boitard), Lord Lovat, Richard Todd and Major John Howard.